THE WOMEN-IN-DEVELOPMENT EFFICIENCY APPROACH;
A CASE STUDY OF PROGRAMMING INCOME GENERATION IN A CHINESE VILLAGE

by

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ABSTRACT

In the 1970s, international development planners began to recognize women's important roles in their communities. A variety of approaches to include women have since evolved, and their merits are debated. They have been described in the literature as "welfare," "Women-in-Development" (WID), and "Gender and Development" (GAD). The welfare approach focuses on basic needs while strengthening women's homemaker and reproductive roles. The WID approach is based on increasing women's incomes as a means toward empowerment. The Gender and Development (GAD) addresses systemic gender discrimination. There is need for research in development planning. Development programs track results during the project, but seldom look at long term impacts and sustainability.

This thesis reports the results of research on a 1991 WID efficiency approach, women's income generation project in Shaanxi Province, China, by examining the impact seven years later. My methodology involved interviews with twenty-one women project participants, eight husbands, village leaders and informal lunch-hour focus group discussions with villagers. The project involved transition from grain to orchards. The orchards dramatically increased women's incomes and improved the quality of village life. The women took full control of orchard management, pushing men out of the orchards saying that they were "incapable" of the monotonous orchard tasks. Most husbands found off-farm jobs, diversifying household incomes. Women gained marketing skills, self-confidence, and financial independence, but remained vulnerable as primary producers to income fluctuations. Most women stayed outside
village politics, and traditional gender role socialization was maintained. The project fulfilled women’s needs and interests, however, long term results for women are mixed.

The Shaanxi field project was one of sixty-six field projects under the Canada-China Women-in-Development Project (1990-1995) implemented in partnership by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and the All-China Women’s Federation. The project had two components: poverty reduction and institutional strengthening of the Women’s Federation. I was the Canadian co-manager of the Canada-China WID Project, and have since completed more than thirty contracts (fifteen projects) plus a two-year contract as co-manager of the Canada-China Women’s Law Project (one year of which was full-time in China). My research is intended to assist and improve my future work in the development field, and to inform those interested in women’s development program planning and gender equality policy.

Good planning was key to the strength of the Canada-China WID Project. Partners shared a common goal. CIDA’s efficiency approach supported the Women’s Federation policy to bring women into production as a means of achieving equality. Participatory planning and decision-making involved Federation project officers across China. Delegation in management and clear, commonly set guidelines increased partners’ involvement and accountability. Power in planning gradually, and tacitly, transferred to the Women’s Federation as they assumed ownership and responsibility for results.

Strong donor/recipient partnership and participatory planning processes strengthen potential for sustainable results. Suggestions to improve women’s development planning include: increasing gender awareness, strengthening women’s
interest and capacity in political participation, developing risk mitigation strategies to lessen income insecurity, blending WID/GAD projects, and further research on project impacts.
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<tr>
<td>ACWF</td>
<td>All-China Women’s Federation (refers to Federation at the national level)</td>
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<td>CEA</td>
<td>Canadian Executing Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCP</td>
<td>Chinese Communist Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCWID</td>
<td>Canada-China Women-in-Development Project (4-year project from 1990 to 1994, extended to 1995)</td>
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<tr>
<td>CIDA</td>
<td>Canadian International Development Agency, an agency of the Canadian Government which provides funding for developmental programs</td>
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<td>FAO</td>
<td>Food and Agriculture Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GAD</td>
<td>Gender and Development (a development program approach)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GE</td>
<td>Gender Equality (used in this thesis as substantive equality)</td>
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<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-governmental organizations</td>
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<tr>
<td>OECD</td>
<td>Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNDP</td>
<td>United Nations Development Program</td>
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<td>UNICEF</td>
<td>United Nations Children’s Education Fund</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNIFEM</td>
<td>United Nations Development Fund for Women</td>
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<tr>
<td>WID</td>
<td>Women-in-Development (a development program strategy)</td>
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<td>WF</td>
<td>Women’s Federation (refers to Federation below the national level: provincial/regional, prefecture level, county level, township level, village level in rural areas, and city level, district, street, neighbourhood levels in urban areas)</td>
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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

International development agencies took decades to realize that women play important roles in the development of their communities. Kabeer (1994) notes that prior to 1975, and the United Nations’ Decade for Women, less than one per cent of standard textbooks on development referred specifically to women, and that “development planning has been about men, by men and for men” (p. xi). Aid planning was top down, with little or no involvement of recipients in planning or implementation (Kabeer, 1994; Young, 1993). The women’s programming that was undertaken served only to re-enforce and support women’s domestic and motherhood roles, treating them as non-productive dependents. Women were regarded as passive recipients of aid. These programs strengthened donor agencies’ stereotypical view of gender roles (women qua reproductive homemakers).

In 1995 a United Nations Development Program report noted that while advances were being made, women still comprised about two-thirds of the world’s illiterates, held fewer than half the jobs on the market, were paid half as much as men for work of equal value, and made up only about ten per cent of the world’s parliamentarians and less than four per cent of cabinet members. The report concluded that:

*In no society are women secure or treated equally to men. Personal insecurity shadows them from cradle to grave. In the household, they are the last to eat. At school, they are the last to be educated. At work they are the last to be hired and the first to be fired. And from childhood through adulthood, they are abused because of their gender.* (p. 31)

Worldwide, feminization of poverty is increasing. In developing countries, women’s situation is being exacerbated by such factors as: (a) failing national economies,
high inflation, and structural adjustment which affects more women than men (Young, 1993); (b) economic modernization which tends to marginalize women, excluding them from the mainstream and technological advancements, and instead concentrates them in exploitive factories or on farms; (c) increases in female-headed households and family break-down or separation, as men leave rural areas for work as labourers in towns and cities; (d) traditional or religious beliefs and attitudes that oppress women and limit their reproductive and other choices; (e) environmental degradation which affects more women (e.g., as hewers of wood and drawers of water) than men; and (g) systemic discrimination which prevents gender equality in power relations within societies, and (h) increases in the sale and trafficking of women (Jahan, 1995; UNDP, 1995 & 1989.) Despite such well-known disparities in women’s condition compared to men’s, major efforts and great persistence have been required to earn women roles as agents and participants in development planning.

**Effectiveness of Including Women in Development Programming**

Rogers (1980) argued that planners’ continued neglect of women’s productivity was a costly error in efficient resource allocation. Women’s lack of access to and control over productive resources such as land, capital, credit, and training disadvantaged them. Providing women with access to and control of key resources increases productivity as well as returns on their labour. It has been frequently noted around the world that women’s spending priorities, compared to men’s, tend more toward family health, family nutrition, and children’s education. Men tend to commit more funds than women to personal consumption, consumer goods, prestige items or entertainment (Black, 1991; Carr, 1984; Young, 1993). Women also work longer hours than men (Mies,
1986), and have proven to be more reliable than men in repaying loans (Moser, 1993; Remenyi, 1991; Villareal, 1995).

World poverty affects many more women and children than men (Remenyi, 1991), and this is particularly evident in rural areas experiencing high rates of male labour migrations to urban areas. Mies (1986) notes that many out-migrants also shed their family responsibilities, leaving wives as de facto heads of households. Estimates are that one-third of the world’s households are headed by women, and this proportion is closer to one-half in developing countries (Moser, 1993). A focus on Women-and-Development is, therefore, essential to the sustainable success of the development programs focused on poverty alleviation in rural areas. For many projects, targeting women is more likely to support donor objectives, reduce poverty, and bring successful results.

Over the last three decades, international aid programming has significantly changed. Boserup (1970) was one of the first scholars to challenge the traditional approach. She argued that international aid programs not only failed to recognize women’s multiple roles and their considerable contribution to the societies in which they lived, but in some cases actually made women’s role and status worse. Development planners were viewing women as ‘secondary’ earners, training them to be efficient housewives rather than improving their ability to compete equally with men in the marketplace (Boserup, 1970). She drew attention to the negative effects that colonialism, and penetration of capitalism into subsistence economies, had on women. Although women in some societies were the mainstay of farming settlements, developed world gender ideologies stereotyped agriculture as men’s work, and in some cases women lost their land rights.
Boserup’s book inspired new thinking among other feminists in the field of development who argued that development programming was ignoring women’s voice. They demanded that women become key players in development, citing numerous examples in which planners failed to recognize women’s contributions to domestic economies and their active involvement in development of their societies. This failure to include women in development planning and implementation, feminist advocates pointed out, had adversely influenced the achievement of donor agency development objectives—sometimes with disastrous results (Bhasin, 1992; Boserup, 1970; Dietrich, 1990; Kabeer, 1994; Mies, 1986; Samana, 1991).

The United Nations’ Decade for Women (1976-1985) played an important role in increasing visibility of women’s economic and social contributions to development. It also focused attention on the depth and severity of women’s poverty and inequality. By the end of the Decade for Women, thinking among some of the international donor community began to move to an approach that attempted to include women as full partners in development planning and implementation, as agents with influence and visibility as well as beneficiaries. Development programs for women focused on improving women’s productive contribution within a market economy as a means of attaining gender equity. Income-generation training was intended to address women’s practical needs, and raise their self-confidence and position in their households and communities.

Donors, such as the USAID (Kabeer, 1994), Canadian International Development Agency, Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation, and United Nations Development Program (Jahan, 1995), recognized the importance of women’s active
roles in the economy and argued that their involvement was essential to the success of
development projects. Pushed and led by feminists within the agency, the Canadian
International Development Agency (CIDA) by 1976 became one of the world leaders in
women’s development programming. CIDA still maintains this central position,
recognized and commended for its gender development planning (Jahan, 1995;
Hershkovitz, 1995; McCann, 1998; Moser, 1993; Parpart, Connelly & Barritteau, 2000;
Young, 1993).

Over the last two decades, women’s development programming has evolved
through a variety of theories and policy approaches. The field has been rife with wide-
ranging and divisive issues, including debate within and between stakeholder groups,
policy planners, donors and recipients of aid, feminist groups from both donor and
developing countries. Its acceptance among donors and developing world partners has
been slow and gradual, and financial support continues to be disappointingly slight.
Moser (1993) claims that less than 4% of United Nation agencies’ project budgets benefited
women, with “a cursory 0.2 per cent of budget allocated directly to them” (pp. 112-113)
and that UNIFEM receives only $5 million of the UNDP’s $700 million budget. Advocates
face on-going struggles for inclusion of women’s programming on development agendas
(Jahan, 1995; Kabeer, 1994), and must cope with a dearth of research on it.

**Contextualizing the Author**

My own interest and involvement in international development programming
for women began in 1990 after three decades in administration in Canadian
universities and colleges, the last as a college dean. My career shift was inspired by a
successful two-month secondment in early 1990 to evaluate, for a CIDA project,
Zambian technical colleges' policies, administration and services. This experience, and many vacations spent backpacking in the developing world, heightened my interest in development issues. Decades of active feminist advocacy inclined my interest particularly toward the effects development, or lack thereof, had on women. A few months following my return from Zambia, I applied for the co-manager position on CIDA’s new Canada/China Women-in-Development (WID) Project. This project focused on poverty alleviation through women’s income generation, and institutional strengthening of the All-China Women’s Federation and its branches throughout China. Within a month that included a week of Ottawa interviews, tests, and briefings, I moved to Beijing and into the position.

My knowledge of China was limited to information from books, Chinese friends, a 1982 tour in South China, a 1988 backpack adventure with my husband on China’s Ancient Silk Road followed that year by a six-week Beijing University summer session course taught in English on “Chinese Culture and Civilization.” When I joined the Project in Beijing, I was aware of profound cultural differences. I was an outsider and illiterate in Chinese. By the project start date in January 1990, my development experience was limited to the Zambian project, a course in my master’s program, and a six-week training program with Chinese project staff in CIDA’s WID framework followed by an Asian study tour of development projects for women.

The Project (1990-1995) partner was the All-China Women’s Federation (ACWF), and was their first bilateral project and CIDA’s first major Women-in-Development project in China. The project’s two goals were: income generation training for poor women in China, and institutional strengthening of ACWF as the project’s partner.
organization. Travel throughout China was extensive with the focus on poverty areas, since project reach extended into every province, autonomous region and autonomous municipality in China.

Since leaving the full-time co-manager position in 1994, I have returned to China on more than thirty occasions, working on programs in various roles including Women-in-Development, gender equality, gender relations, training, poverty reduction, cultural minority interests, socio-cultural issues, and project management. I have been involved in designing, monitoring or evaluating nine Canadian, two Australian, and three internationally funded projects, primarily in China’s poor areas, in a variety of roles such as team leading, co-managing, human resource development, training, gender and women’s inclusion, reporting on site-relevant socio-economic issues, poverty and income generation. In 1998 I was co-team leader designing the Canada-China Women’s Law Project and from 1998 to 1999, I worked full-time in China on this project’s implementation. I remain involved on a part-time basis until the project completes in 2004. This project was ACWF’s first large project in women’s rights.

During these years in development work, I have sought out the voices of women, visited hundreds of Chinese villages, listened to and learned about women’s survival strategies, needs, ideas, hopes and plans for the future. I have a deep respect for the tenacity, strength, skills and courage of these rural women. Their needs and interests have become the basis of my work in development, and of my on-going advocacy for women’s presence and involvement as decision-makers as well as beneficiaries of projects. In the past I had learned from village women about their
needs, and looking to the future I needed to learn, again from the women, the developmental results of Women-in-Development efforts which increased their incomes. This research was born out of these interests.

My interest in studying the Women-in-Development approach deepened as some donor agencies began to reduce or discontinue financing for women-specific projects in favor of mainstreaming gender into projects. More than five years after the Canada-China WID Project, I wanted to explore its results in a project site. While development programs track changes occurring during the project cycle, they seldom research long-term impacts and sustainability. I wanted to learn what developmental effects, if any, had occurred as women's incomes increased.

Our Chinese project implementation team and I held high expectations for project results. Some research on women's development programming had reported that training women in income generation only increased their workloads; added stress and feelings of exploitation, lowered esteem and powerlessness; and caused declines in general health. In some cases, over-burdened with work, women had become marginalized within their communities (Sen & Grown, 1987). Our expectations, however, were that women's increased incomes would heighten their self-confidence, autonomy and independence; strengthen their roles in household and community decision-making; and improve their access to and control of resources such as land, credit, and training. We hoped that women's position in the village would improve, and that they would gain ready access to village leadership and opportunities to influence their communities. We hoped that women's financial empowerment would be supported by the families and villages involved, transforming
traditional domestic and gendered values with minimal or no inter- and intra-family
dissent. These were the objectives of development strategy for women.

Community values and attitudes toward acceptable women’s roles could have
resulted in women’s loss or gain in influence and power; and their loss or gain in
access to land, credit or practical skills training and subsidies. Female children’s school
participation rates could increase, or decrease, if the girl child was needed at home to
assist an overworked mother. Village poverty, or beckoning opportunity, could result
in male out-migration to distant towns for work, feminizing village agriculture, and
possibly resulting in marriage break-down. The quality of life for village women and
children could improve – or poverty could become feminized.

Changes in women’s self-esteem can be linked with, or occur independent of,
their increased incomes. Aid interventions can help, hinder, or be neutral to this
process.

Gender equality must be wanted and claimed by women themselves. Also the
village context may inhibit or facilitate positive benefits from women’s increased
incomes. Villages are not static communities, but subject to many forces which can
temper the impact of aid interventions. This is especially true in China where the State
has pushed peasant communities through a series of massive reforms at
unprecedented speed (Croll, 1985), and currently is forcing immense reforms to
transform to a ‘socialist market economy’ (World Bank Country Study, 1992a). This
research is intended to assist and improve my future work in the field of development,
and inform those interested in women’s development programming and gender
equality policy.
The purpose of this thesis is to explore issues and challenges surrounding the inclusion of women in international development programming, to describe the various strategies and approaches used, and to examine the effectiveness and results of one strategy for women's programming in a village in China. The development strategy examined is "Women-in-Development" (WID), the "efficiency approach" that focuses on enhancing women's roles in production and increasing their incomes as a means of contributing to their gaining gender equality. Using field research findings from a CIDA Women-in-Development project in a Chinese village, I describe the outcomes and results achieved in relation to women as agents and beneficiaries in their households and community. I conclude by exploring factors relevant to planning strategies, including the importance of adapting development approaches to the needs and interests of women agents and beneficiaries.

In Chapter 2, I review literature on the impact of socio-economic change on gender equality in developing countries. Key development strategies, policy approaches and models used to strengthen women's condition and status, are explored. The politics and processes involved in planning are discussed. In Chapter 3, I review CIDA's international leadership role in development programming for women, and its WID strategy in China. The Canada-China Women-in-Development Project (1990-1995), my project field site, is described. I provide information related to this research on the mandate and role of the partner organization, The All-China Women's Federation. In Chapter 4, I describe the context and research methodology involved in re-visiting, in 1998, a CIDA project site in China to learn the ways in which women's increased incomes have affected their quality of life and that of their families since the
project took place in 1991. Field visit findings are described in Chapter 5, and I explore the meaning of money and its influence on project women, their families, and the community. In Chapter 6, I examine quality of life issues that improved as women’s incomes increased, as well as other factors inhibiting women’s opportunities and agency. In the final chapter, I examine WID approaches and methods of implementation in relation to the findings, concluding with my reflections as a development worker, and suggesting ways in which WID strategies for poverty reduction may be strengthened.
CHAPTER TWO: FROM WELFARE TO EMPOWERMENT: PROGRAMMING STRATEGIES FOR WOMEN'S DEVELOPMENT

This chapter explores the context and the evolution of development strategies for women. Development strategizing takes place in a context rife with diverse interests, values and political approaches. Within this context, various approaches to women's development have evolved. These approaches, and their relative merits, are explored. As some approaches require gender analysis to determine target group needs and to guide project planning, gender analysis tools are introduced.

Context for Planning Women's Development Programming

Program planning for women takes place in a context involving a plethora of players from donor agencies and recipient countries. These players bring to the table a wide range of values, preferred approaches, different development priorities, and a wide range of beliefs and attitudes toward gender equality and women's needs. Planning is formed by the interaction between the established goals, objectives and strategies of both the donor agencies and the recipient governments. The selection of a development strategy involves reconciling any conflicts that may exist between donor and stakeholder agendas.

1 In a bilateral project, for example, players on the donor country side may involve the government, the government's funding agency, an embassy representative of the government funding agency, the executing agency contracted by the governmental funding agency to run the project and any partnership institutions that they may involve, and after the project begins include also the field staff. On the recipient country side, the players may include: the government, the government ministry providing oversight to the donor projects, the in-country partner (e.g., an institution, or one or more departments of one or more branches of government at one or more levels as deemed appropriate for each major target site), and the field staff office. Other players involved on both sides may include government agencies or institutions with specific interest in, or knowledge of, the development focus of the project. Examples in China for women's projects include: The Poverty Reduction Board, The All-China Women's Federation, Women's College of China, Women's Research Institute, women's NGOs.
This selection is not a simple task. Depending on the urgency of a recipient country’s needs, the donor agency may hold almost all the power in a negotiation, and may force agreement – but only at risk to a project’s smooth implementation and the long-term sustainability of its outcomes. When post-project sustainability is a donor agency goal, as it is with CIDA, the recipient government must have, or must develop during project implementation, a long-term commitment to these goals. Without this partner commitment, the project will have little influence beyond its cycle. Donor agencies, however, may have objectives which export stereotyped roles and attitudes toward women and toward development with its aid policies (Braidotti, Charkiewicz, Hausler, & Wieringa, 1994; Guijt & Shah, 1998; Moser, 1993; Sen & Grown, 1987). At the same time, the objectives of the aid-recipient government partners directly involved in the negotiation may not be fully transparent, and their position may only come to light during project implementation.

In the case of women’s development programming, donor agencies can influence a project’s feminist agenda by their choice of development approach. Their choice may reflect their gender stereotyped beliefs, and may insist on particular versions of women’s equality or strengthen women’s traditional roles. For example, Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) provided aid linked to family planning, intending to influence reductions in family size in the developing world. FAO ran a project in several provinces in China (1990-1995), the focus of which was women’s income generation – but contraception training and commitment to control family size was a requirement for women to participate. Another example is the importance some donor countries currently place on human rights, resulting in an increase in bilateral
projects focused on rights related issues and good governance. Applied to women, these projects insist on outcomes such as protecting or developing women’s rights, curtailing domestic violence, ending prostitution and trafficking. In some instances, however, the recipient country’s commitment may not be as strong as the donor country would like.

Although donor values determine initial development project goals, learner needs and interests are addressed and negotiated at a later date, during a deeper and more detailed level of project design, by a donor agency field team working collaboratively with the recipient country’s implementation group. Cervero and Wilson (1996, 1994) describe this negotiation of interests in program planning as taking place in a context subject to social and political powers and interests. They emphasize the importance of planners’ responsibility to ensure involvement of those affected by the programs they plan, while working within a context involving political and social power relationships.

In our view, all planning practice takes an ethical stance about whose interests matter and then relies on political skills to negotiate those interests. To answer these ethical questions in practice requires a specific vision or belief system. For if a planning theory is to inform the judgments planners routinely make in negotiating interests, it must be rooted in an ethic that is not based solely on power. Our theory of planning practice rests on the belief that adult and continuing educators should actively promote a substantively democratic planning process. (Cervero & Wilson, 1996, p. 11-12)

A program’s democratic planning process, as described by Cervero and Wilson, includes everyone affected by the program, and “planners’ responsibility, and the
central problem of their practice, centers on how to negotiate among the interests of these people to construct a program” (1996, pp. 11-12). Planners must have the judgment, ability and will to bring in the right people at the right time to ensure each voice is heard. Program planning, whether in development or in education settings, is a dynamic process involving negotiation with key stakeholders. From my experience in development over the last decade, I view project planning as involving several layered stages.

At the initial stage of project development, the donor and the recipient government agree on the project framework, goals and key objectives (or impacts and expected outcomes under result based management systems). This first stage may take months or years for the donor and the recipient government to negotiate agreement on goals and key objectives, and determine an implementation date. In the second stage, the donor calls for bids on the preliminary project design, and based on predetermined criteria selects an agency to develop the design. Bid proposals describe in some detail how the bidder (e.g., a non-governmental organization or a post-secondary institution) plan to develop the project, introducing another level of decision-making influencing the project. The donor holds the power in these two stages.

The third stage involves the donor country design team working collaboratively with recipient country agents and implementers in developing a detailed implementation design (e.g., target sites, activities and rationale, Gantt charts, annual workplans, and itemized budgets). This design usually is initially based on the goals and key objectives identified at the first stage, and the design described in the selected agency’s winning bid. The donor country design team is led by a representative of the
implementing agency, who may work as a co-team leader alongside an agent of the recipient country. Working with their teams, the task of the leader (or co-team leaders) is to consult with all interest groups, and to develop and negotiate the best possible project design. This is a trust-building process that involves discussions among and between the donor agency team members and the recipient government team members to share knowledge, ideas, cooperate and collaborate, and reach agreement on project design details. At this stage “planners not only act within the context, but also act upon the context” (Sork, 1996, p.83). It is difficult for the team to alter first stage goals and key objectives, but changes and improvements on the design may be recommended with a justification. Power is shared by donor and recipient representatives so that partners support the plan.

This process of design development involves the team’s consulting, for example, with first stage recipient country representatives of the donor and recipient government, recipient country experts, government officials from ministries or bureaux linked to the project in some way (e.g., resources, trainers, administration). The team meets in field target sites with those who could be affected by the project (e.g., key stakeholders, potential learners, related government departments, local experts and institutions). The field site visits help the donor agency team members to develop a basic understanding of the field context in which the project will take place, collect relevant data required for the design (e.g., baseline data, field conditions, performance indicators, risks, assumptions, strategies). Learner needs and interests are important considerations, as well as the field target site conditions relevant to successful project implementation. In an agricultural project, for example, conditions
may include availability of arable land and water resources, support and assistance from local government departments, analysis of poverty indicators for the region, readiness and interest of villagers. Over the last decade, donor and recipient acceptance of participatory techniques for use at field site levels (e.g., rapid rural appraisal, participatory action research, focus groups, household interviews) has helped significantly to ensure attention is given to identifying the needs and interests of target groups and stakeholders.

The fourth stage is project implementation. Donor agency use of adult education methods, participatory techniques, and experiential learning facilitate learner involvement in content and training methods. During project implementation, several donors, including CIDA, use a results based management system of reporting (quarterly, semi-annually, and/or annually) which ensures key project participants’ on-going involvement in monitoring and annual planning. Iterative management allows for change in the third stage design, with the approval of the key players from the donor and recipient country. During this stage, skills are transferred and power shifts gradually to the project team of the recipient country. This process is required to ensure post-project sustainability.

If this four stage process proceeds smoothly, project planning evolves from the donor’s broad initial objectives, is adapted and developed to address recipient country needs within the donor’s initial purpose, and finally is taken over by the recipient country and integrated into their policy and/or practice. Achievement of this level of sustainability requires donor and recipient partners designing a project based on
mutual interests, and developing a trustful and cooperative partnership as soon as possible during implementation.

Evolving Approaches to Development Programming for Women

Development programming for women evolved over the last four decades through a series of strategies or approaches intended to advance gender equality. Although these strategies developed sequentially over time, all are still practiced. Donors, and recipient governments or agencies, adapt these strategies to suit their own agendas for women’s roles in society. Some overlap between strategies occurs, usually reflecting donor agencies’ gradual move into increased recognition of women’s capacity and their varied roles, and the importance of gender equality. Development agencies, researchers and specialists have categorized and labeled the development approaches for women that have evolved. Moser (1993) and others describe these as welfare, equity, anti-poverty, efficiency, and empowerment. These approaches are described in this chapter, noting other categorization terms used.

Three of the five approaches described (equity, anti-poverty, and efficiency) are generally described as “WID” (Women-in-Development) strategies. The empowerment approach falls under a “GAD” (Gender and Development) label. Among donor agencies, WID and GAD have become the most common nomenclatures for women’s development programming, but these may also overlap. WID approaches target only women and generally focus on strengthening women’s status and position as a means of enabling women to claim gender equality. Examples of WID activities include women’s group formation, literacy/numeracy and practical skill training, and income generation. GAD approaches address gender relationships, women’s rights, and
attempts to change traditional sex role stereotyping and gender role assignments among their target groups. GAD focuses on achieving gender equality, so target groups normally include men as well as women.

All the approaches are adopted and adapted by donors and recipient governments to meet their specific interests, needs, and institutional goals for development. Selection of a model is politically determined, and varies among donor agencies based on the strength of belief in, and commitment to, gender equality. Donor agencies, women’s development researchers and field workers classified the strategies used for incorporating these approaches in various ways. A gender-neutral strategy accommodates gender issues but does not address them. An integrationist strategy (colloquially called “add women and stir method”) includes a women’s component into an existing or a new project without significant change to development priorities concerning gender. Jahan (1995) notes that “many feminists, especially those from the South, rejected the goal of integration. They argued that women did not want to be integrated in an unequal and exploitative system – they wanted to change the prevailing system” (p. 12). A women-specific strategy focuses mostly on women as project agents and beneficiaries, addresses their needs, and accommodates gender or men’s interests or needs only if these support women’s project related interests. An example of the latter is Canada-China Women’s Law Project (1998-2005), a good governance project that focuses exclusively on issues related to women’s law, but includes men as an important target group (e.g., as a minority of trainers, as gender awareness and women’s rights trainees, or as socio-legal researchers).
Welfare Approach

Prior to the Decade for Women (1976-1985), few development programs for women were undertaken by donors and recipient government agencies. Those that were undertaken followed a welfare approach, focusing on strengthening women’s homemaker and reproductive roles, and on meeting their basic needs for food, shelter, fuel and clean water. Projects frequently targeted the poorest of the poor, giving food and providing basic health care training and/or services. Planning under the welfare approach was top down (Young, 1993), and women beneficiaries had no influence in how projects were run. Donor agency representatives told the women to be ‘developed’ what to do and how to do it. The ‘banking approach’ to training was commonly used.

The welfare approach is still popular, preferred by some government agencies and traditional non-governmental organizations. Examples of welfarist projects for women include giving women in poverty households such essentials as food, health services, clothing, and fuel. Emergency assistance for people in desperate need following disasters is also considered welfarist. Some welfarist projects may provide small grants to support women’s home-based traditional handicrafts, but these tend to be labour-intensive and earn minimal or fluctuating profits. Such charitable household grants are not expected to change women’s status, re-define their productive roles, or increase women’s financial power and household decision-making. They are expected only to help in some small way toward meeting a family’s basic needs. The welfare approach provides needed, but only temporary, assistance and offers little in the way

The welfare approach is an easy and simple approach that is popular among donors. It appeals to the hearts of those they represent as well as recipient governments, as it entails comparatively few challenges and does not threaten the status quo. There is less work involved in giving something away to women, such as food or blankets, than in organizing groups to earn it for themselves and their families (Visvanathan, Duggan, Nisonoff & Wiegersma, 1997). The general public is responsive to fund-raising appeals for this form of charity.

The welfare approach has been criticized on several counts (Boserup, 1970; Braidoti, Charkiewicz, Hausler & Wieringa, 1994; Moser, 1993; Rowlands, 1997). In some developing societies, it introduced the sex-role stereotypes of the developed world and actually restricted women’s roles. Reddock (2000) cites examples of traditional matrilineal societies or gender equal societies (e.g., Morocco before Islamization, the Bari of Columbia, the Nayar of south India, and the Tiwi of north Australia) restricted or replaced during ‘development’ by colonizers who had gender inequitable ideas of class, race and ethnicity. Strengthening women in home-based activities was viewed by feminists as encouraging women to become more efficient housewives and further marginalizing them. It served to limit women’s place to household-based activities. The welfare approach also fails to include women as agents in planning. Young (1988) notes that this approach has little or no impact on the underlying structures of inequality. Kabeer (1994) indicates that failure to consider
gender role differences leads to under-utilization of women as producers, and a great loss in efficiency.

**Women-in-Development Approaches**

The following three approaches are labeled as “WID”: equity approach, anti-poverty approach, and efficiency approach. The development strategy differs in each of these three approaches, but they share a common goal of considering women’s needs, situation and condition in the communities targeted, and of strengthening women’s roles. The success of WID projects often depends on the activities involved being suitably accommodated within a reasonable working day for women, supported by household and community members, and appropriate for local resources and markets. Local contexts are also important, and WID planners must also consider gender differences (and any transitions that may occur in these differences) in socialization, literacy, learning and education, and access to skill training. Gender differences in nutrition, wellness, and access to health services may also influence the success of WID projects. Lastly, understanding traditional values within the target communities is crucial, as values affect a woman’s abilities and opportunities for both increasing her income and retaining control of the money she earns, for developing self-confidence and ability to influence others, and for winning the respect and support of the local community. Women’s position and status are strongly influenced by the conditions and values of the communities in which they live.

**Equity Approach**

The equity approach addresses the failings of the welfare approach by insisting on gender-equitable roles in development. Introduced by feminists from North
America and Europe during the Decade for Women (1976-1985), the equity approach involves women as agents as well as beneficiaries of development. It focuses on women’s strategic interests (i.e., creating the conditions which will empower them). Examples include: achieving equity in pay and the division of labour; giving women equal access to and control of resources; improving women’s roles in household and community decision-making and in political processes; facilitating development of women’s advocacy and support groups; strengthening women’s rights and their ability to claim rights. The equity approach strives to balance power in gender relations, adopting a liberal western feminist approach in the home, the workplace, and the community. This approach also strives to meet those practical needs of women that are viewed as necessary and enabling conditions for empowerment.

Affirmative action to improve women’s labour force access, and eventually achieve workplace equality, was a focus of some equity projects. Moser (1993) notes that the equity approach, from the beginning, faced opposition. At the 1975 International Women’s Year Conference, developing world delegations criticized the equity approach as representing developed world feminist views of equality, rather than the needs of women in the developing world. Not only was the equity approach unpopular with developing world delegations, but it was also unpopular with both donors and recipient governments. Donors faced methodological difficulties in finding indicators to measure project success. Recipient governments were wary of the redistribution of power the equity approach implies. They viewed these programs (e.g., donor funding for developing world feminist non-governmental organizations adopting feminist agendas labeled Western) as disruptive to traditional practices and
potentially threatening to stability. Feminists in the developing countries saw such non-governmental organizations as liable to be outside the mainstream, very small, and have an agenda that was influenced by donor funding. Success was difficult to measure, often achievable only in the long term and well beyond the length of the project. Also there was little support from male-dominated development agencies for a development approach that focused on out-right redistribution of power based on gender (Kabeer, 1994; Kardam, 1981). Kardam pointed out that acceptance frequently depended on existence within agencies of women policy entrepreneurs with the political clout to bring women into the mainstream of development programming.

Feminists in the developing world (Braidotti, Charkiewicz, Hausler & Wieringa, 1994; Sen & Grown, 1987) expressed concern that the strategic interests addressed were ethnocentric, and represented developed world, middle-class feminist views, that conflicted with the broader, longer term view of developing world women’s groups that linked gender strategies to other forms of oppression such as race, ethnicity, religion, and class. Their view was that women’s empowerment should focus on increasing women’s self-confidence and self-reliance, and accept their ability to determine their own development path – rather than focus on a Western feminists’ agenda implying a power struggle between genders. Kabeer (1994) noted that bringing viewpoints of poor developing world women into development practices can help to ensure indigenous knowledge and experience are known, and that reality-based needs are clarified. As a result of all these objections, Moser (1993) indicates that few programs have been run using this model.
Anti-poverty Approach

In reaction to the concerns raised by the equity approach, the anti-poverty approach focuses on improving poor grassroots women's income generation ability. The underlying causes of women's poverty are seen as lack of access to resources such as land, and services such as credit, education, and skill training. Compared to welfare 'give-away projects,' the anti-poverty approach provides women with sustainable income generation skills, often involving introduction of income diversification in the household, microenterprise development, cash cropping, and increased profits from existing income sources (e.g., improving breeds, changing crops, first stage processing of products). Changing women's role in society is sometimes implied, but not directly addressed. Raising women's income, it is hoped, provides women with the options accompanying their gaining financial independence, improves their decision-making power in households and communities, and increases their self-confidence. Many projects have been implemented in the last two decades, and this approach is especially popular among non-governmental organizations (Moser, 1993).

The overall success of this approach has been uneven. Some projects facilitated poor women's entry into the productive economy, but often into low paid, low-skill monotonous factory work with poor working conditions, and with little or no hope of promotion into supervisory roles traditionally held by men. In recognition of women's household responsibilities, some training focused on developing traditional skills for home-based microenterprises. Unfortunately, these were often labour-intensive crafts earning low profits and subject to market fluctuations. Sometimes initial investment was at risk as neighbours, witnessing a microenterpriser's initial success, would copy-
cat production and flood local markets. Jacka (1997) describes this occurring in China’s courtyard economy campaign, noting that microenterprisers who were informed were able to adjust product lines with relative ease. In some communities, the income generation activities only increased women’s workloads, lengthened already over-taxed workdays, without increasing women’s decision-making power in the household. Decisions on women’s incomes would revert to husbands or household patriarchs, and expenditures to meet women’s priorities ignored (e.g., labour-saving devices to lessen women’s work, microenterprise investment, education of the girl child, and improved nutrition). In the worst cases, women participants in anti-poverty projects were further marginalized and oppressed, and control of their incomes fell to household patriarchs. In some cases, the microenterprises selected for training proved not to be viable, and participants despaired of the loss of their initial investment after long hours of work. As described by a grassroots woman in China, they had ‘expected a watermelon but received only a sesame seed’.

Many donors came to realize that work must improve women’s position, rather than replicate their subordinate roles within the family or community. Rather than exploitive low-paid piecework in unsafe factories, donors and recipients needed to find stable higher-paying jobs in the mainstream of the economy that involved training, responsibility, and some level of autonomy. This depended on an understanding of how women’s work is organized and how it can increase their emancipation, status and power.

Mies (1986) writes that male dominance and exploitation of women rest partially on a position that regards women’s household and child-care work as an
extension of their physiology, invisible and outside the concept of labour that applies to men’s work in production. Down-valuing women’s work, relegating women to low-paid labour-intensive work in the informal sector, and segregating their roles in the mainstream economy, all serve to limit women’s opportunities to household-based activities and gender-stereotyped work, and to restrict the development of independence, influence and free choice. Mies (1986) notes that women’s position is especially vulnerable during periods of economic transformation. Bradley (1989) also notes this vulnerability, stating that while men’s traditional roles are also challenged in times of transformation, men succeed in capturing for themselves those jobs which have responsibility and require skills.

In rural areas, according to Bradley (1989), decision-making and mechanized work is a male privilege, and “women are left with the brunt of routine work, planting, cultivating, harvesting and picking, milking, tending pigs and rearing tasks” – work which is generally of low status and low pay. Women are delegated the fiddly and monotonous tasks, “presumably because of a greater readiness to concentrate on a dull task” (p. 83). Bradley’s research indicates a perception that men do not have the patience and care such tasks require (pp. 82-83). The gender division of rural work is subject to variations, according to local custom and tradition (Bradley, 1989; Moore, 1988; Young 1993). Orchard management in China, for example, may be considered as primarily women’s work in one community, and men’s work in a neighbouring community.

In their research in China, both Jacka (1997) and Judd (1994) have noted variations in gender divisions of rural labour. In some cases, where women’s
microenterprise involves cash-cropping in household courtyards proves profitable and contributes a large portion of household income, Jacka notes that village committees will label the microenterprise as a “specialized household,” and decision-making for the microenterprise may be taken over by patriarchs. Judd describes the shift in the gender division of rural farm labour occurring as men in the household migrate to urban areas for jobs: farm labour in these communities is feminized as women add to their roles those tasks previously assigned to men.

In the context of WID strategies focusing on anti-poverty, planners must carefully consider local gender divisions of labour, examining such issues as why tasks have been divided and how they fit together. Are tasks, for example, gender sequential (inputs are gendered but occur at different stages during production) or gender segregated (women and men assigned full and sole responsibility for different production tasks, such as livestock raising)? Gender segregated work gives women more control and decision-making authority over their work. Planners must also examine the gendered roles of household members in farm and domestic tasks, the nature of the household enterprise, the total hours worked per day on domestic and on farm tasks, the intra-household decision-making processes, the control of income and spending, the use of mechanization in domestic and farm work, the patterns of land ownership, and the possibilities of out-migration for off-farm labour. All of those conditions around the organization of work affect the success of WID anti-poverty approaches, and contributed to the development of the efficiency approach.
**Efficiency Approach**

This WID approach focuses on promoting the efficiency of women's work, improving women's productive contribution in a market economy in order to attain equity. Like the anti-poverty approach, the focus is on women's income generation, but the pitch is for slightly higher results – not just to reduce poverty, but rather to bring women into the mainstream of the economy, preferably with decision-making power and at gender equitable pay scales.

The efficiency approach is based on the recognition that, without the active involvement of women in a country's productive economy, human resources are under-utilized and development is hindered. Kabeer (1994) notes that the efficiency approach was to "rescue women from the margins of development and integrate them into the mainstream" (p. 25). The underlying assumption is that increasing women's labour force efficiency improves gender equity. The second underlying assumption was that women's workday is elastic, and that they could handle increases in their 'double burden' of domestic and production work.

Compared to the anti-poverty approach, the efficiency approach shifts away from a focus on women in poverty and toward a focus on development. Moser (1993) indicated that for many recipient governments seeking to increase productivity and efficiency, it became the common top-down model for providing increased labour productivity at the lower wages levels earned by unskilled labourers. For poor households, women's added income cushioned devastating impacts from economic adjustments, climatic disasters, resettlement and migration from rural to urban areas experienced in developing countries.
Bringing women into the productive economy made sense to donors and recipient governments. The World Bank (CIDA, 1995c) indicated that development investments in women resulted in greater economic efficiency and social returns as women’s spending priorities differed from those of men — women invested in areas such as children’s education, training, health and nutrition. Various studies indicate that women spend a much larger proportion of their incomes on basic household needs, and less on personal gratification, than do men (Black, 1991).

Research provides ample evidence that women more frequently than men are negatively affected by the restructuring of state economies, often resulting in feminization of agriculture and of poverty, family breakdown and increases in female-headed households, gender discrimination in the labour force, marginalization of women, and other socio-economic changes which tend to widen the gaps in gender equality (Jahan, 1995; Kabeer, 1994; Macdonald, 1994; Moser, 1993; Sen & Grown, 1987). Under the efficiency approach, such impacts were often neglected in development planning, as the focus was on women’s participation in the labour force. Little or no consideration was given to societal changes underway, women’s situations and conditions, and aid outcomes. Assumptions were made that a women’s day was elastic and women capable of shouldering a ‘double burden’ of household and production work. Strong and enduring tradition allocates to women primary or sole responsibility for care-giving and household tasks, and cannot be easily changed. In some cases, increased workloads were offset by increasing workloads of female children, thereby shortening or ending their school attendance. Among the ‘poorest of the poor’ frequently targeted in development programs, women’s health has been
seriously affected by unreasonable extensions in hours of work. Systemic
discrimination in households and communities in some cases prevented women's
control of the incomes they earned. The WID efficiency approach was criticized as
ignoring race and class issues, and promoting a world view based on Western thinking
(Braidotti, Charkiewicz, Hausler & Wieringa, 1994; Guijt & Shah, 1998; Kabeer, 1994;
Barreteau, 2000; Sen & Grown, 1987). Rowlands (1997) claimed that focusing on
women's role in production “was (and continues to be) an approach which
'instrumentalises' women, using them as a resource for meeting other development
goals such as population control, sustainable development, and so on.”

Those committed to the efficiency approach at CIDA examined the conditions
under which a target group lived (e.g., physical conditions, climate, possibility of
meeting basic needs, water shortages); and examined women's situation (e.g., religious
restrictions, literacy levels, local traditions influencing women's place and roles).
Women's access to resources and services (e.g., credit, training opportunities, land,
education) and control of, for example, their income and rights to marry by choice are
important issues. The goal was not only to meet women's practical, or basic, needs
such as food, health care, fuel, and clean water, but also to attempt meeting at least
some of women's “strategic interests,” their need to advance toward gender equality
and influence change. It linked with the equity approach in targeting women's ability
to mobilize for political action and to form groups for collective empowerment, and to
improve their knowledge of legal rights and how to claim rights, their decision-making
power within households and communities, and their self-confidence and gender
awareness. CIDA adapted the efficiency approach to include addressing some strategic interests, rather than focusing solely on women's role in the labour force.

This approach may have serious limitations, unless it is accompanied by both participatory research to identify the special needs and interests of target group women, and gender analysis as a means to improve understanding of target group women's situation and condition. The latter investigates such aspects as household and production workloads, women's slack times if any, their access to resources and services (such as land, credit, employment and security), and needs related to training, nutrition and health. Discussions with women may also reveal the context of their lives: the extent and impacts of male out-migration for work and feminization of poverty, prevalence and acceptance of domestic violence, boy-child preferences, female infanticide, trafficking and sale of brides, and also the degree to which women have self-confidence and control over the incomes they earn. In some cases, the support of the household patriarch is required for women in the household to participate. Projects developed under the efficiency approach that investigated and gave attention to women target group's situation and condition were better positioned to strengthen women's empowerment. Unfortunately, many projects were implemented with a single focus on mainstreaming women into production and contributed little or nothing to women's empowerment or financial independence.

The efficiency approach received wider acceptance than the equity approach among donor agencies and recipient governments because it avoided the equity approach focus on a feminist agenda (considered radical by some), because it supported governments' needs to increase the labour force at entry levels at the lower
end of pay scales, and because it could be implemented with minimal disruption in entrenched gender roles. Increasing women’s roles in production did not always result in increasing their financial power and strengthening their roles in household and community decision-making. It was left to women to claim those rights themselves.

The previous three approaches fall under a Women-in-Development definition. As Parpart et al (2000, p. 64) note, WID remained “the dominant approach of governments, relief and development agencies (both United Nations agencies and NGOs), and bilateral donor agencies.” WID’s anti-poverty and efficiency strategies met the objectives of the donor and recipient agencies.

**Empowerment Approach: Gender and Development (GAD)**

The Decade for Women provided a world-wide forum for feminist groups to debate issues surrounding the failures in development programs in achieving gender equality. From the developing world in 1984, Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN) rose, founded by a committed group of activists, researchers, and policymakers from nineteen countries advocating alternative development methods “to attain the goals of economic and social justice, peace, and development free of all forms of oppression by gender, class, race and nation” (Sen & Grown, 1987). They spoke of disillusionment from past failures in aid approaches. They claimed that WID’s focus on women’s education, training and income-generation as a means to raise women’s status was ‘like treating cancer with a bandaid’ (Beneria & Sen, 1981; Boserup, 1975). Improving women’s incomes and education was insufficient to enable women to claim equality. WID was proving unable to tackle systemic discrimination or to change entrenched patriarchal attitudes. Kabeer (1994) notes that developed world
planners were seen by the developing world as the chief architects of global
domestication of women. The demand was for stronger developing world feminist
involvement in the agendas of aid projects, and greater attention to the underlying
societal structures which prevent balancing power between genders.

Out of such concerns, the GAD approach emerged. This transition was explained

*The WID approach is associated with a concern to increase women’s participation and
benefits, thereby making development more effective. Gender and Development
represents a transition to not only integrate women into development, but look for the
potential in development initiatives to transform unequal social/gender relations and to
empower women.* (p. 5)

This approach assumes women’s subordination is a result of male-claimed superiority
and underlying societal structures. It maintains that women experience oppression
differently according to their race, class colonial history and current position in the
international economic order (Connelly, MacDonald & Parpart, 1995; Jahan, 1995;
Moser, 1993; Rowlands, 1997; Reddock, 2000). The approach addresses gender
relationships and inequalities, and attempts to strengthen women’s agency, self-
confidence and ability to make their own life choices and to influence change. Men, as
well as women, are targeted in project design and implementation. Issues addressed
include systemic discrimination, women’s rights and empowerment, good governance,
decreasing gender disparities, strengthening women’s groups and organizations,
improving gender relations and working towards gender equality. A variety of GAD
projects have been run, and examples include projects relating to women’s rights and
claiming rights, village governance, women’s non-governmental organizations addressing political action; increasing visibility of, and providing services for, domestic violence and trafficking of women; and advocacy for law reforms to support gender equality.

Achieving results of GAD projects is usually expected to be of longer duration than in other approaches because changing traditional beliefs, attitudes and behaviors toward gender equality is a lengthy process. Development planning under the GAD approach includes project components, for example, in political action, gender awareness, use of media, rights and claiming rights, all of which are intended to meet women’s strategic interests and promote gender equality.

Implementers of this approach maintain that planning is based on grassroots needs, but the strategic interest goals that underpin planning may be imposed by the donor’s feminist agenda, and not derived from grassroots participants. Gender awareness is raised in the grassroots but grassroots mobilization for political action is a long term, difficult and sometimes hazardous objective – and results are difficult to measure. Since GAD focuses on relationships between women and men, feminists have raised criticisms that the emphasis on gender diffuses focus on women, making them once again invisible (Reddock, 2000). In many cases, women were integrated into projects dominated by male decision-makers, and women’s voice, agency and issues were lost or ignored. The intention of integration was to give women gender equality within the project, but the result was ‘add-women-and-stir,’ token representation of women, and agency roles and benefits accrued to men.
This approach has not been popular with recipient governments because of its potential to challenge traditional patriarchal power structures. Many donors find its challenges and long-term commitment excessive. Acceptance of the GAD approach has been slow, and GAD projects are in the minority. Some successes have been achieved through small scale projects run by women’s groups funded by non-governmental organizations. In recent years some donors have included a GAD component, where appropriate, in some projects (e.g., a GAD approach is suitable for addressing women’s issues in good governance or human rights projects).

Research and its Role

Worldwide, WID researchers, policy makers and field workers consistently express the need for research (Connelly, MacDonald & Parpart, 1997; Jahan, 1995; Kabeer, 1994; Moser, 1993), and lack of research has been identified as the cause of past development errors leading to disastrous results for intended women beneficiaries (Bhasin, 1992; Boserup, 1975; Charlton, 1997; Dietrich, 1990; Kabeer, 1994; Mies, 1986; Samana, 1991). The development field itself is rife with debate on philosophical approaches, frameworks, and planning models. Set within this field, planners complain that WID theories and frameworks have been developed, but remain untested, and their theoretical underpinnings in practice are weak. Development programming for women struggles for a place on development agendas (Moser, 1993), challenged by traditional notions of gender roles, and side-tracked by seemingly endless debate over preferred approaches.

Development programming for women is plagued by unending feminist debates on approaches and priorities. Key among these debates is the challenge to
theorists’ high priority on improving women’s productive roles as a basic requirement for women’s emancipation, rather than on tackling systemic gender discrimination. WID programming strategies focus on women’s roles in production and increasing women’s incomes; both have been condemned by some as instrumentalizing or exploiting women, and providing few or no gender equality benefits.

All of the above approaches for women’s development programming overlap and intersect, despite analytic and political attempts to make distinctions. The success of any of them depends upon careful gender analysis and an understanding how to involve participants in their implementation. Gender analysis and participatory development bring feminist ideas into development planning regardless of the approach used. They have changed donor training methods from ‘banking’ top-down systems to methods involving participatory training better able to focus on learners’ needs and interests, and facilitate learners’ active involvement in training sessions.

Participatory methodologies require planning that involves grassroots’ participation, baseline studies, grassroot mobilization for project implementation, and organization of advocacy groups. The entry point is through addressing local women’s most pressing practical needs, as identified by grassroots participatory research. Planning seeks to ameliorate pressing practical needs, but links this to training in strategic interests. Adult educators may recognize the roots of these methods in the writing and teaching of Paulo Freire (1970). Care must be taken with participatory methodologies in projects that integrate women, and are not women-specific. In some instances, women in the presence of men may not have the confidence or the cultural permission to participate freely in grassroots discussion and decision-making. For
Grassroots women’s voices to be heard, in some cases women’s participatory groups first meet separately from men’s groups to discuss and develop an initial position to present to the large group (Guijit & Shah, 1998). Applying participatory methodologies may be time-consuming and complex, but can provide an excellent forum for identifying local wisdom and local concerns.

Gender analysis involves examining: (a) household and productive division of labour by gender and by member of the household, (b) women’s practical needs (e.g., basic needs such as food, clean water, housing, fuel, safety, children’s education, basic health provision), (c) social, economic, legal, cultural barriers to women’s participation; (d) women’s strategic interests (e.g., what women identify as their needs to advance toward equality, for forming groups for collective empowerment, for learning and claiming their rights); and (e) risks and mitigation strategies for minimizing challenges encountered. The analysis considers conditions under which women live: physical conditions, possibility of meeting basic needs, geography and potential for climatic disasters, extreme water shortages. The analysis considers also women’s situation: what restricts or aids them to improve their situation (e.g., religious restrictions, or politics). Access issues are considered (e.g., land, credit, education and training), as are control issues (e.g., women’s control of the income they earn, role in household and financial decision-making, rights to use land allocated to them, rights to select their spouse or decide the birth of a child). This analysis is undertaken together with examination of the socio-economics of the target area, poverty levels and indicators, local politics and community traditions.
The advantage of a well-founded gender analysis is that it enables the adjustment of gender strategies and project design to reflect the needs and interests of target group women and target group communities. The initial analysis can be monitored frequently during implementation to report gender-related results to donors, and to identify problems for resolution as they occur. Gender analysis and participatory methodologies are important to the success of WID and GAD projects.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, there were few donor projects in China focusing exclusively on women's development. Few WID projects had implementation strategies in which women were agents as well as beneficiaries. The CIDA project in Shaanxi which the rest of this thesis will describe was a WID efficiency approach project focusing on income generation. To the best of my knowledge, there has been no similar research published in China on the post-project sustainability of WID project context and impact. Income generation training has been the focus of most development programs for women, yet very little research has been undertaken (or at least published) to describe the context in which they have been implemented and the development impacts which have occurred.
CHAPTER THREE: CIDA IN CHINA
HELPING "WOMEN HOLD UP HALF THE SKY"

This chapter describes the roles of the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and its partner, The All-China Women's Federation (ACWF), in initiating and implementing the Canada-China Women-in-Development Project (1990-1995). CIDA's leadership role among international donors in the evolution of approaches to women's development is explained. CIDA initiated a five-year, women-specific development program with the All-China Women's Federation. This was an innovative undertaking since the Federation had little experience in managing large development projects, but offered reach across China and depth to grassroots levels. The Federation's role and work as official voice for women of China is briefly explored, and the project is described. One site, the Shaanxi Courtyard Economies Project, became the focus of my field research, and is introduced. I describe how power in planning shifted from the donor to the recipients during implementation.

CIDA's Role in Development Strategies for Women

Among international donors, CIDA was a pioneer in Women-in-Development (WID) (Connelly, Li, MacDonald & Parpart, 2000; Jahan, 1995; Moser, 1993) holding a leading role among donors. CIDA's record in development programming for women has been attributed to the intelligence and persistence of women advocates within the agency with enough "political clout" to be heard (Jahan, 1995). Early in the 1970s, CIDA described their approach as raising awareness of women's multiple roles;

\footnote{Old revolutionary slogan, still in use.}
bringing women into development as both agents and beneficiaries; addressing practical needs and strategic interests; not limiting the agency to a specific feminist agenda; and focusing on closing the growing economic gaps between women and men with income generation training for women to bring them into the mainstream of the economy. By 1976, CIDA had appointed a WID coordinator, becoming one of the few bilateral agencies to have done so, and announced their WID policy and guidelines emphasizing women's role as agents as well as beneficiaries of development projects (Jahan, 1995; and letter from CIDA Minister Labelle in 1998). In 1983, a WID directorate was appointed, and in the following year a framework approved making WID a cross-cutting issue to be addressed by all CIDA development projects. During the Decade of Women (1976-1985), CIDA promoted WID strategies, drawing the attention of the international development community to the importance of women's participation in development planning and implementation of programs.

WID projects are women-specific, and women are the primary agents and beneficiaries. Equity and efficiency approaches address some strategic interests, especially through institutional strengthening of women's groups and organizations. Integrating WID components into existing and new projects (e.g., an equitable quota for women to be established in an attempt to ensure women's equal access to training) became a requirement.

By 1986, after a decade of planning and experience, the Minister responsible for CIDA, tabled a five-year Women-in-Development Action Plan in Parliament. The Action Plan had nine priorities: (1) liaising with non-government organizations and institutions to encourage integration of women into CIDA/partner development
programs; (2) reaching the business community, whose overseas initiatives can complement CIDA's efforts to address women's needs; (3) informing multilateral donor agencies of their initiatives, and supporting the integration of WID into their policies and programs; (4) changing CIDA's management systems to integrate WID with responsibility and reporting requirements; (5) training and sensitizing CIDA staff about women's roles in development, and ways to enhance project planning and implementation; (6) communicating with the Canadian public and aid recipients about CIDA's WID initiatives; (7) creating strategies to provide training and scholarships to a growing number of women from developing countries; (8) developing plans and guidelines that include and benefit women and girls in developing countries; and (9) collecting gender-specific data about women's roles in developing countries to eliminate unintentional discrimination in programs and projects, and to facilitate effective planning.

WID became institutionalized within CIDA, to be addressed and included in all project designs, monitored and evaluated during project implementation for successes and lessons learned. By 1987, WID and gender awareness training of CIDA staff had been completed (Jahan, 1995). A CIDA feminist staff group of WID advocates had taken the lead in spearheading these initiatives, by challenging an existing assumption that men and women were sharing equally in the benefits of development programs. They noted that, while women performed two-thirds of the world's work hours, their important role and contribution to the betterment of communities was unpaid and unreported, and hence unrecognized and invisible (CIDA, 1989). The WID advocates persisted in advocacy to keep women in the forefront of development and to prevent
their marginalization, battling what came to be called “WID fatigue” among colleagues as it occasionally emerged.

For some time, many in-country small WID projects had been supported through the Canada Fund for Local Initiatives, targeting groups of poor women from rural or urban areas. By 1989, CIDA noted that WID planning should also be extended to multi-million dollar ‘women-specific’ bilateral projects for greater depth and impact (Jahan, 1995). From experience, CIDA had learned that projects with integrated WID components (a strategy labeled as “add-women-and-stir”) did not usually meet the expectations of their WID planners. In many projects WID quotas or goals received only token acceptance by either or both of the Canadian implementing agencies and recipient country partners. Despite CIDA’s monitoring and evaluation efforts, implementing partners’ backgrounds and commitments to WID were often weak. For example, in 1987 human resource development programming became CIDA’s central programming thrust (CIDA, 1987). Under CIDA’s China Human Resource Development program, women’s participation in all categories of training programs rarely exceeded 25%, and expenditures for women’s training averaged 23% a year. CIDA’s review of this program concluded that “with regard to the issue of gender equity, both Canada and China need to improve their record” (CIDA, 1992). In China CIDA had a leading role among donors in developing the women-specific Canada/China WID Project (1990-1995), and in moving beyond the more common welfare and anti-poverty approaches that served only to strengthen women’s homemaker and reproductive roles. The Canada-China WID Project had a WID efficiency approach, and during implementation moved into addressing some strategic interests of participants.
CIDA also recognized the need for women’s involvement at the project design stage, with subsequent baseline studies undertaken to improve planners’, and later implementers’, understanding of gender roles in the societies served. Gender analysis was expected, in some form, from every project. CIDA’s WID strategy was evolving based on experience, research, and lessons learned from the field.

WID programming during this period typically addressed women’s practical or basic needs (e.g., access to food, shelter, fuel, clean water, or health services), income generation and sometimes women’s strategic interests (e.g., women’s rights, political involvement, access to land, credit and training). Income generation training was viewed as essential to women’s gaining economic independence, to increasing their options and opportunities, and to expanding their roles in financial decision-making in households and communities. Gender awareness training focused on the gender division of labour within households, highlighting visibility and extent of women’s ‘double burden’ in productive and reproductive work; gender inequities in access to schooling, health services, training, and in rural areas to credit and land rights.

Following the Decade for Women, concerns with WID’s limitations as a development strategy voiced by feminists from the developing world and others influenced CIDA. In 1992, CIDA issued a revised agenda for women’s programming to recognize increased interest in GAD empowerment approaches. Objectives under the new strategy were to challenge gender discrimination, to promote women’s rights, to increase women’s empowerment and decision-making roles.

Internationally, the development planning emphasis slowly began to shift toward the newer “Gender and Development” (GAD) approach. Under GAD, project
planning re-focused on issues such as systemic discrimination, women’s rights and empowerment, good governance, decreasing gender disparities, strengthening women’s groups and organizations, improving gender relations and working towards gender equality. CIDA again remained in the forefront among international donor agencies with a revised and updated policy on Women-in-Development and Gender Equity (1995). CIDA’s policy commitment was re-stated in four points: (1) to increase women’s participation as decision makers in the economic, political, social, and environmental spheres; (2) to improve women’s economic conditions, basic health, education and human rights; (3) to promote activities aimed at eliminating discrimination against women; and (4) to support developing country partners in voicing their concerns on gender issues in development (CIDA, 1995).

After two decades in women’s development programming, CIDA had concluded that inequality between genders was the major cause of unequal sharing of development benefits, and that WID should re-focus and expand to include men and women. “This approach encompasses the entire social context, involving the division of resources and responsibilities, benefits and rights, power and privilege, in all sectors of society” (CIDA, 1995d, p. 6). CIDA produced in 1995 Gender-Based Analysis: A guide for policy making; and in 1997 a guide to Gender-Sensitive Indicators and a Project Level Handbook: The why and how of gender-sensitive indicators. These publications were promoted to improve objective setting and results reporting on GAD achievements in field projects. Although a shift from WID to GAD emphasis in women’s programming was occurring by the mid-nineties, CIDA continued support for women’s economic independence and poverty reduction among their development priorities. By 1999,
reflecting commitments to gender equality in the Beijing Platform for Action (1995) and OECD reports, CIDA reiterated their thinking that “sustainable development – especially poverty reduction – will not be achieved unless we eradicate inequalities between women and men” (CIDA, 1999, p. 2).

**CIDA’s Partnership with The All-China Women’s Federation**

The context for development planning, as described in Chapter 2, has strong influence on the nature of the projects that are undertaken, their gender perspective, and intended goals. In the 1980s, CIDA Beijing and The All-China Women’s Federation (ACWF) had developed a mutually satisfying linkage through implementing several small, short-term (less than one year), poverty reduction projects under the Canada Fund. The process involved the Federation proposing women specific projects to CIDA, and once approved, implementing them in single sites. By the late 1980s, CIDA was working with the Federation to develop a four-year project that by 1990 became the Canada-China Women-in-Development Project (CCWID). It was implemented in partnership between The All-China Women’s Federation, the only organization able to provide access to women across China at all levels, from grassroots to national leadership levels. Although ACWF’s experience in running large development projects was very limited, the reach and depth of the Federation facilitated the project’s meeting the needs and interests of grassroots women at rural village and urban neighbourhood levels.

The CCWID project’s efficiency approach (which included GAD elements and targeted anti-poverty target groups) focused on improving women’s productive contribution in China’s opening of a market economy with socialist characteristics. The
project targeted poor women, providing Women's Federations throughout China with support for addressing poverty reduction, a State priority in which gains were being realized. China's economy was described as being one of the world’s fastest growing, and no other country had seen "such a large proportion of humanity rise from poverty so rapidly" (Kristoff & Wudunn, 1995, p. 14). At that time, rural poverty was estimated (World Bank, 1992, p. ix-xviii) as declining from about one-third of the rural population in 1978 to one-tenth by 1985, increasing rural per capita incomes more than 130%. By the latter part of the 1980s agricultural growth had slowed, and government poverty alleviation strategies continued through five year plans through the 7th to the 9th five year plans (1986 to 2000), with a State goal to eliminate poverty by the Year 2000. The Project also provided opportunities for key personnel in Federations to broaden their knowledge of international women's issues prior to the 1995 UN Conference on Women. Flexibility in the CCWID Project, introduced early in the project cycle, enabled responsiveness to emerging interests and needs among target group women, as well as ACWF and CIDA.

The All-China Women's Federation and “Women can do what men can do”

From its beginning, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) ideology supported the need to end women's oppression, and to broaden the CCP ranks by recruiting women into all levels of the Party. The CCP took power in 1949, and by 1950 the State passed the Marriage Law, the Agrarian Reform Law, and legally recognized the All-China Democratic Women’s Federation. This legislation amounted to some of the most

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3 Chinese feminists' revolutionary slogan.
progressive women's rights legislation of the time among developing countries (Croll, 1983). Participation of women in social production was identified as a precondition of women's emancipation.

...the mobilization of women to participate in production is the most important link in the chain that protects women's own vital interests...it is necessary to begin with production for both economic property and economic independence promote the political status of women, their cultural level and improve their livelihood, thereby leading the way to emancipation. (Croll, 1983, p. 2 quoting from documents of the Women's Movement in China, All China Democratic Women's Federation, Peking, 1949).

The Marriage Law (1950) included protection of women's and children's rights; gender equality, monogamy and free choice in marriage partners, age of marriage set to at least twenty years for males and eighteen for females, divorce rights, joint property rights for property acquired during the marriage, etc. It forbade the sale of brides, dowries and desertion, gave parents equal responsibility for the care and upbringing of children, and gave children responsibility for the care of elderly parents. The Agrarian Reform Law (1950) gave women equal land and property rights, and equal status in the labour market, where women's role was both needed and ideologically supported.

The All-China Democratic Women's Federation was established seven months before the CCP took power in 1949 (Jacka, 1997), subsuming women's organizations that had been growing in urban areas since early in the century. In 1957, the State established The All-China Women's Federation (ACWF) as a mass organization with the official voice for women of China. The Federation had the difficult dual role of
carrying government propaganda down throughout the country to the grassroots women, and of bringing women's interests and needs to the attention of government.

Legislation, however, cannot guarantee changes in attitudes and traditions. Gender and power issues can be viewed as fundamental categories under which social relationships are organized. Women's emancipation challenges traditional norms and long-standing gender and power structures. It touches the hearts of family, their beliefs and behaviours, and the roots of community. In China, women's emancipation involved change in female and male relationships, household and workplace roles, marriage and divorce, and women's political, social and legal status – all of which met with opposition, particularly in the countryside. Gilmartin (1995) indicated that the CCP, when faced with severe opposition by rural men on these issues, compromised their goal of women's emancipation by refocusing on encouraging women to increase and to strengthen their roles in production as a means of achieving emancipation. The CCP compromise, according to Wolf (1985), suited the Party's enduring patriarchal underpinnings, but resulted in a "revolution postponed" by its inability to achieve acceptance of women's emancipation throughout China. The assumption was that women had the means and resources to liberate themselves (Mies, 1986).

Gender equality issues cross-cut many sectors of any society, and changing these beliefs, attitudes and societal structures is a long-term process. For example, even the considerable efforts made by many countries during the UN Decade for Women (1976-1985) to further the status of women was judged by feminist groups as having had little impact (Kabeer, 1994; Maguire, 1984; Tinker, 1982).
In China gender attitudes vary at least as widely as in most countries, and gender discrimination can survive in most surroundings. Gender attitudes vary between the educated and uneducated, between rural and urban areas, and between sophisticated coastal areas and isolated inland regions, and between China’s minorities. One minority, Pumi in Yunnan, is described by Zhong (1985) as matriarchal, and in a description of Lu Village in Yunnan, Bossen (2002) indicated matrilineal and uxorilocal customs. Generalizations are difficult to accept, and to avoid.

By tradition, women in China were responsible for routine, under-valued, ‘lighter’ work perceived as requiring less skill and ability than men’s work. In most places, Jacka (1997) notes, same-surname and same-village marriages were forbidden. Thus, this tradition of patrilocal marriage in rural areas meant (and often still means) that women before marriage are regarded as temporary members of little value to their natal villages, and on marriage considered as outsiders in their husbands’ villages. Hence the old folk saying is: “Educating a woman is like watering another man’s garden.” Female abandonment, female child infanticide, trafficking women, illiteracy, back-breaking work, a “double burden” of long hours of household and production work, restrictive traditions and superstitions were familiar in women’s daily lives (Croll, 1985; Curtin, 1975; Wolf, 1985), and to some extent continue in China.

Role of the All-China Women’s Federation

Since 1950 the task of helping women achieve emancipation, as defined by the Party, has fallen largely to the All-China Women’s Federation. Their role as the State’s official voice for women involves implementing, promoting, or initiating government policy designed to improve the position of women, safeguarding women’s rights and
interests, and pushing forward women's emancipation. As the General Principles of ACWF's Charter describe the role:

*The All-China Women’s Federation is a mass organization of society which links together women across the country of all minority nationalities and from all walks of life under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party to achieve further liberation, and form a bridge and a transmission belt linking the masses of women with the CCP and the government.*

*The ACWF is an important force in building socialism with Chinese characteristics. The ACWF takes Marxism-Leninism, Mao Zedong Thought and Deng Xiaoping Theory as guides for its action. During the primary stage of socialism, the ACWF plays an active role in uniting and educating women on a broad scale to implement the Party's basic line and build socialist material and spiritual civilization. The ACWF's basic function is to represent and protect the rights and interests of women, and to promote equality between men and women.*

ACWF has branches in all of China's 32 provinces, regions and autonomous municipalities, in 376 prefectures, in 2,825 counties, 47,635 townships and 6,012 neighbourhoods. There are approximately 85,000 staff, and more than one million workers are volunteers, mostly at grassroots rural levels. Representing over 500 million women, ACWF is one of the largest (if not the largest) women's organization in the world. To fulfill the difficult dual mandate to promote State policy and to represent women's interests, the Federation has adopted a wide range of strategies to change women's traditional thinking, to increase their production skills and incomes, and to improve the quality of family life. Long-standing campaigns organized include: raising
self-confidence and independence ("4 Selfs campaign), broadening understanding of women’s issues, increasing knowledge of women’s legal rights, improving women’s literacy and practical skills for income generation (e.g., "Courtyard Gardens", "Vegetable Basket", "Two Learns and Two Competes"), poverty reduction ("Alleviate Poverty by Year 2000"). "Spring Bud" is a campaign that solicits donations from the public to pay school costs required to re-enroll girl drop-outs from poor families. Campaigns are also run to improve women’s understanding of sanitation, nutrition, parenting, prevention and treatment methods for common diseases and illnesses, to promote modern and sanitary midwifery techniques and to protect the environment. The delivery and effectiveness of these campaigns, however, vary considerably in accordance with the reputation, courage, skills, motivation, influence and resources of the individual Women’s Federation staff and volunteers who run them. Each campaign requires fund-raising from public or local governmental sources.

Despite the Federation’s efforts, traditional attitudes toward women have not yet been overcome, but “few parallel rural transformations in such a short time span exist anywhere” (Croll, 1985). The Federations’ work has not been simple. At various times members faced abuse, and if considered over-zealous in their task have sometimes been punished. The Federation’s role in implementation of the Marriage Law (following 1950) met with great resistance from peasants, sometimes resulting in severe physical violence against Federation representatives and peasant women (Jacka, 1997). In 1980, the President of ACWF is quoted (Croll, 1983) as urging women to speak out regardless of consequences: “In handling problems of immediate concern to women we should not fear giving offence or taking some risks, we must dare speak and be good at speaking in
support of women” (p. 3). ACWF faces a number of constraints or difficulties in fulfilling its role. One difficulty is the Federation’s dual and contradictory mandates to represent both the CCP and government, and all women of China with a single voice raises credibility and other questions. At times, the Federation has been viewed as a puppet of government. Past debates on the Women’s Federation role caused CPP’s disbandment of the entire organization during the Cultural Revolution (Croll, 1985). ACWF has also been criticized as supporting a gender division of labour (Jacka, 1997), as not being sufficiently forceful on gender issues, and for uneven program implementation across China, a difficulty faced as success of programs undertaken ultimately depends on the talents and will of the local level Women’s Federations.

Although ACWF was instrumental in development and passage in 1992 of the Law to Protect the Rights and Interests of Women, enforcement of women’s rights is constrained by the knowledge, understanding and acceptance of women’s rights by the enforcement and administrative support channels. The Federation’s wide-spread program to promote and to train in women’s rights has experienced other difficulties inherent in training illiterate women in rural communities. Federation’s programs have been criticized as treating women’s rights as a women-only issue, excluding men who must be informed before understanding and acceptance of women’s rights will occur.

The Federation is also constrained by lack of funds, and of political power (Rosen, 1993). Since 1995, ACWF has been defined as a Chinese non-governmental organization, receiving about a third of its funding from each of government, public donations, and businesses or services they operate. Federations at each level (provincial, prefecture, county, township, village) must solicit funds from corresponding levels of
government for activities or services they run. Local government priorities, restrictions and funding can limit Federation autonomy in activities they can select and implement. Despite poverty grants to poor areas, generally speaking, the poorer the area, the poorer the government and the Women’s Federation. Local governments may experience cash flow problems, and Federation staff may work for months without pay.

Worldwide, few rural communities have undergone as dramatic an extent and pace of reform as China (Croll, 1983). To respond to issues emerging in China’s transformation to a market economy, ACWF goals have involved improving women’s education and income-generating skills as a means of bringing women into the labour force on an equal basis to men and in the belief that economic independence is a precondition of equality. During China’s economic reforms in the 1990s, ACWF retrieved the revolutionary slogan “Women can do what men can do,” re-spinning it to “Men can do what women can do” to support their goals of socializing domestic tasks, relieving women’s ‘double burden,’ and facilitating women’s increased participation in the new economy (ACWF, 1994; ACWF, 1993). Model husband campaigns were run in various places throughout China. Other five-year goals of the Federation in the period in which the CCWID Project ran included: involve women in the national reforms underway; raise women’s general level of competence; defend the legitimate rights and interests of women; strengthen the unity and cooperation between ACWF and women’s groups of democratic parties, religious circles and women’s professional groups; and expand involvement in international exchanges (ACWF, 1988). The ACWF work towards gender equality in the past several decades was advanced through the United Nations’ Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995. Gender equality became
increasingly more focused on women's rights, and the Federation began working to incorporate gender awareness into government decision-making.

CIDA's WID Focus in China: The Canada-China Women-in-Development Project

CIDA's approach to women's development programming found expression in a major project in China between 1990 and 1995. The Canada-China WID Project (CCWID), partnered with the All-China Women's Federation, was the cornerstone of CIDA's WID strategy in China (CIDA 1991), and was appropriately timed during China's fast paced modernization.

The Canada-China WID Project design was women-specific, initiated in the late 1980s using an efficiency approach predominantly targeting poor women as beneficiaries. It incorporated some Gender and Development elements as appropriate to the target areas (e.g., training in women's rights and women's issues, literacy/numeracy, group mobilization, and building women's self-confidence and self-reliance). The Project was ACWF's second multi-million dollar partnership development project, their first income-generation project, and their first bilateral project. Their only previous experience with a project of this size was with a four-year UNICEF project focused on women and children (Lin Shangzhen, interview March 2001). As for other projects, CIDA opened bidding on this project for selection of an executing agency to be responsible for implementation. The Association of Canadian Community Colleges won this bid and became CIDA's executing agency for the project.

The project goal was “to increase the participation of women in the process of economic modernization in China as agents and beneficiaries of development” (CIDA,
1991 & 1993). The project had three objectives: (a) to support income-generating and training projects of Chinese women through a WID fund with both contribution and revolving credit components; (b) to strengthen the institutional capacities of the All-China Women's Federation to manage projects, conduct gender analysis and improve the situation of women in China; and (c) to train trainers from the Federation in economic development, project management, WID, and technical skills that are economically viable for grassroots target groups (CIDA, 1991).

Two project components supported these objectives: income generation for grassroots women (with about seventy-five per cent of the budget allocation), and institutional strengthening of the Women's Federation. The primary target beneficiaries for income generation were grassroots women from the following groups: (a) disadvantaged women from rural, remote, or mountainous regions; (b) from National Minorities; (c) from urban areas impacted by plant closures and lay-offs; (d) and women who were illiterate, unemployed or underemployed.

To ensure that women would be agents as well as beneficiaries throughout implementation, in the first year of the project (1991) we organized through our CCWID Beijing Office an eight day meeting in Beijing involving seventy key Women's Federation project management personnel, representing every province and region across China. Together, we reviewed the CCWID Project design in detail, and made some amendments. We jointly decided on proposal application process and selection criteria for projects to be sponsored. Proposal applications could be submitted by any level of Women's Federation, routed through the provincial/regional Federation Office. Our intention was to sponsor at least one project in each province/region/ autonomous
municipality. Proposals would be forwarded to the CCWID Beijing Office for screening, and then submitted for funding decisions made by the Joint Project Management Committee comprised of representatives from the All-China Women's Federation, the Association of Canadian Community Colleges, CIDA and the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Cooperation. I represented the Association of Canadian Community Colleges at these meetings.

My Chinese co-manager and I then trained the seventy Federation project officers present in WID's efficiency approach. We wanted to reach agreement that our target was to bring women into the mainstream of the economy at gender equitable income levels, in areas offering relative sustainability, and with decision-making power. Our intention was to avoid poverty reduction approaches traditional at that time which were labour intensive, low paid, insecure and with marginal profitability (e.g., household crafts, mat weaving). To do this successfully required more research on the part of those proposing projects. Training would focus not solely on income generation skills, but possibly also include integrated components on women's issues, building self-confidence, business management in a market economy, literacy/numeracy, basic health and nutrition, etc. We also reviewed the tasks involved in each stage of the project cycle (i.e., design management, monitoring and evaluation), accounting and audit controls. Their duty on return to their home provinces/regions was to pass this understanding on to other Federation staff at other levels.

This eight day meeting was an adventure in learning for us all. For me, it was an opportunity to learn first-hand how the Federations functioned, constraints and challenges they faced and regional differences, and sensitive areas that for them
required discretion and strategies. The representatives present were middle level leaders with responsibility for grassroots campaigns. Many had never been to Beijing, and a few had seldom traveled beyond their home province or region. Only a few had some experience in running donor financed projects. All were totally attentive during participatory sessions covering a wide diversity of questions from those attending. All were also very familiar with the problems and women’s issues in their regions, and many had ideas to help women. Those representatives from the richer, more developed areas of China shared strategies and advice with those from the poor, and more remote regions. My referring some of the field-based decisions to them was a visibly new process for the group. The entire process was so satisfying and successful that we decided at that first meeting to hold annual workshops for the purpose of cooperatively monitoring and evaluating the field projects, and guiding the CCWID project’s implementation. Over the following years of the Project, the network expanded, long term friendships grew, and strategies developed. In recent years many of the group have been appointed to leadership positions within the Women’s Federation or within government or in aid agencies. A few have successfully joined businesses in the market economy.

**Institutional strengthening of the Women’s Federation**

Under the component of the CCWID Project intended to strengthen the All-China Women’s Association, twenty-seven field projects were undertaken. Projects were selected based on proposals submitted by each province or region and unique to their interests and needs. A “Training of Trainers” process (common in China) was used. This involved top level trainers preparing 764 Federation leaders (620 at the
middle and lower level, and 144 at the senior level) who subsequently trained ten other Federation women, resulting by the end of the project with a total of 7,174 trainers. Each of these trainers committed to train at least 15 other women at grassroots or neighbourhood levels, but most trained many more. At the time of CCWID final evaluation over 500,000 women had been trained.

Topics taught varied among the twenty-seven projects run in accordance with proposals submitted. In most cases adult education teaching methods were used, and involved active participation of learners. Group facilitators or trainers were selected from among China’s top experts, or from Canada. For senior level leaders topics included women’s issues, WID/GAD development strategies, gender analysis, donor and public fund-raising, adult education methods, environmental protection, commodity economy and economic reform, enterprise management, business feasibility planning, basic accounting, marketing, and strategic management and leadership. Shared understanding of these latter topics became especially relevant for the Federations as in 1990 the Government began pushing mass organizations to raise their own funds for activities by fund-raising and enterprise development.

For middle and lower level Women’s Federation leaders, volunteers and staff trained as trainers, the content generally focused on specific skills intended to improve women’s abilities in income generation. Training generally followed a competency based approach, to ensure that each learner had developed the skills necessary to pass their learning on to others. Skills selected for each area considered local conditions and support, feasibility, and target group interests. Projects covered, therefore, a wide variety of topics appropriate to the targeted group and community (e.g.,
microenterprise development, management and leadership, border trading, business and marketing, banking and credit, aquaculture, integrated agriculture, greenhousing, husbandry, fruit growing, and manufacture of local products.

The project also ran three Asian study tours. Each tour involved three countries, chosen based on preferences indicated by the participants at our annual workshop (e.g., Malaysia, Hong Kong, India, Philippines, Indonesia, Singapore and Thailand.) Each tour had 29 participants who were Women’s Federation project officers and their leaders from across China. The tours involved participants networking with other national level women’s organizations to compare women’s issues and development approaches, and site visits to selected projects. Except for three tour participants, this was the first time for participants to travel outside China. Imbedded as a condition of participation was that each participant was required to write a report indicating her reactions to what they had learned from each item on their itinerary, and to evaluate this learning in relation to their work in China. Group debriefings each evening were required, and a group report on the study visit to be submitted directly on return to China. Many of the participants mentioned that the tour had “opened their eyes” through exposure to cultures foreign to them. The tours and training broadened participants’ knowledge and understanding of differences in approaches and helped participants to develop networks with other women’s organizations which later proved useful as ACWF subsequently hosted the Fourth United Nations’ World Conference for Women in September 1995 shortly after the CIDA project completed.
Income-generation Training

The focus of this component was to improve women's income-generation abilities preferably by bringing them into economically viable occupations suitable to both the target groups and China's modernization. A total of 51 projects were completed with at least one project per province, and two projects in China's poorest areas. Altogether 115,696 grassroots women trainers (the majority from rural areas) were trained in practical skills for income generation, and by project end they had trained more than 2.2 million women.

Provincial/regional level Women's Federation project officers were responsible for implementing each field project, and routinely reporting to the CCWID Beijing Office several times a year on the progress and finances. The CCWID accountant had taught all provincial and regional project officers basic accounting procedures, and accurate reports were required quarterly before the next disbursement was made. Each project was subject to field monitoring and inspection by the project officer from the CCWID Beijing Office. Accompanied by the project officer involved, I participated in more than thirty project site visits for the purposes of monitoring or evaluation. Financial audits were undertaken by CIDA external auditors and by Association of Canadian Community Colleges. CIDA officers undertook seven field visits, and in 1993 CIDA organized a five member team of Chinese and Canadian consultants to conduct an evaluation of the CCWID Project.

Each project was unique and reflected local needs, target group interests, resources and opportunities available. The target group women, as previously mentioned, were: (a) disadvantaged women from rural, remote or mountainous
regions; from (b) National Minorities; (c) from urban areas affected by plant closures and lay-offs; (d) and women who were illiterate, unemployed or underemployed. For rural target areas, our provincial and regional Women’s Federation participants sought out and proposed a wide and innovative range of field projects that involved protected transition from subsistence cropping to rural production, extending arable land, and cash-cropping. In some cases, local Federations, in consultation with area specialists, discovered elite crops or livestock breeds requiring minimal labour and earning very high profits that were suited to poor target areas in their province/region. For urban areas, projects generally reflected areas emerging in China’s new economy (e.g., a women’s savings centre, a women’s bank branch, a women’s incubator market, insurance branch, an unemployed women’s placement centre training in marketable skills). Projects with the largest project investments were assessed revolving loans, a first for China, which were repaid as the businesses subsidized by the project earned profits. About $250,000 was allocated in loans, and all loans were repaid by 1996.

**Project Implementation**

The CCWID Project journeyed well beyond its original mandate, as was necessary for successful implementation. GAD elements were introduced by integrating with income-generation training topics such as women’s issues and rights, leadership, self-confidence building. Some projects came to be considered by CIDA as primarily GAD in nature (e.g., a Shanghai women’s branch bank, a Jiangsu women’s savings and loan unit, a Henan insurance project, an Inner Mongolia trickle irrigation project which included a small start-up loans program run by women participants.)
In 1993, CIDA contracted a five member team of Chinese and Canadian experts to examine all aspects of the project, and to travel to project sites in ten randomly selected provinces and regions to undertake inspections. The team had no linkages or previous contact with the project. External evaluators declared the project a success on all counts.

This project receives high marks as an international development project. Great care and attention have been taken in project implementation resulting in individual projects and training initiatives proceeding ahead of schedule and exceeding planned targets. Ripple effects of these projects in communities and replication locally was witnessed by the evaluation team – evidence of superior project implementation and ownership of the project by the local Women's Federations. In total 57 projects have been approved and 41 projects have been completed since the beginning of the project. There are approximately 60,000 direct and 830,000 indirect beneficiaries of this project, the great majority of whom are women whose standard of living has been improved by this project. It is important to note that this project has only completed its first full year of actual project implementation at this time of the mid-term evaluation. The total number of project beneficiaries could easily reach 3,000,000 by the time of project completion. (CIDA, 1993, Executive Summary, p. 1)

The Project attracted considerable attention from the multi-lateral and bilateral donor community. Almost twice as many projects had been run than we had initially planned, largely as a result of the Federations' efforts and success in soliciting in-kind contributions (e.g., land, trainers, equipment, classroom space) and funding from local governments.
By 1995, the Women's Federation reported that over 115,696 women had been directly trained in practical skills for income generation. As each trainee committed to train at least twenty other women in her village or urban neighbourhood, the total trained was reported to be more than 2.2 million women. This well-established approach to training enables the Women's Federation and government departments (e.g., Agriculture, Husbandry, Forestry) to better meet the skill training needs of China's large population. Although there may be some variance in the total reported, through our Project's monitoring training effectiveness down to grassroots levels on most field projects, the total is probable. Surveys involving the 110,000 of the women directly trained as trainers indicated that income-generation training had increased household incomes on average by 300%, with spending priorities ranked as schooling of children, improvements in food and nutrition, and investment in income generation activities (CIDA, 1995g).

Of those trained by the Project, 43% were illiterate or semi-literate and 42% came from 22 of the National Minorities. In accordance with target group needs and interests, training (usually financed directly by the Women's Federation) covered topics such as: self-confidence building, women's issues and legal rights in China, basic literacy, management and leadership, basic health and nutrition.

Trainer/trainee evaluations at project end described outcomes for each project, stresses and challenges faced, lessons learned, changes occurring in the household division of labour, changes in women's status and decision-making authority in the home or community, as well as recommendations for future projects. Women had
gained confidence in their abilities, and determination to broaden and expand their skills.

Of the Women’s Federation staff who had undertaken projects, many became known in their communities as well as in government departments. They gained face, *guanxi* (i.e., others tacitly understood obligations to them, similar to *quid pro quo*), and inter- and intra-community networks as their traditional role expanded to improve women’s skills and incomes. Many examples of Federation and grassroots women’s post-project success in their careers or enterprises were reported. Some Federation staff from the CCWID Project moved into leadership positions in government or in aid agencies. These successes were due to a flowering of the latent talents and abilities of project participants, or from the skills and experience gained through their involvement in the project.

**The Shaanxi Courtyard Economy Project**

Shaanxi Courtyard Economy Project, involving women’s income generation, was undertaken in CCWID’s first year (1991). This project is the case study for this thesis. The project enabled village women in poor households to finance income losses incurred as they converted their land from wheat/corn subsistence cropping to profitable orchards. It involved training of trainers (TOT) in cash cropping fruits, vegetables and herbs in under-utilized courtyards in poor rural areas with serious shortages of arable land. Training also included marketing, profit/loss and business management, and women’s issues. Shaanxi Women’s Federation training targeted two thousand women in Minqing County’s fifteen administrative villages, and involved the development of one hundred demonstration households as project training sites.
Villages were selected based on poverty level, poor geographical or climatic conditions, and under-utilization of courtyards. The initial proposal reported women participants’ annual income before training averaged 132 yuan (approximately $18 Canadian). After the first year courtyard cash cropping incomes increased to average 500 yuan (approximately $66 Canadian).

Some sites maintained the courtyard cash-cropping throughout the CCWID project cycle, but a few used incomes from the gardens to subsidize gradual conversion of their land allocations from wheat/corn cropping to orchard development. The field site for this research was Zhang Village which was beginning the process of village-wide development of apple orchards at the time this project began.

The CIDA external evaluation team randomly selected, then conducted on-site investigations of twelve projects in ten provincial/regional sites across China. Shaanxi Province’s Courtyard Gardens Project was selected, which involved thirty-seven villages including Zhang Village. The team’s comments were positive.

For the trainees who planted grapes in their courtyard, the benefits of the project were already realized in the first year with an increase in their income from 400 yuan per capita by approximately 800Y. In rural China this increase is considerable. This project has increased the pride and self-confidence of the village women and it is claimed that their husbands are extremely happy that they improved the household income.

Implementation of this project is complete, but it is assured that project benefits will continue for a long time (CIDA, 1995g).

The Shaanxi Project is described in the following chapters.
Institutional Strengthening and Distribution Power in Development Planning

In Chapter 2, I explained the unequal distribution of power between the donor and recipient country in project planning. In concluding this chapter I explore, as an example, how the axis of power shifts during implementation of a project from the donor to the recipient country. This redistribution of power depends on various factors such as establishment of trustful partner relations, successful skills transfer, smooth implementation, and occurs as the recipient country's field team assume ownership and take hold of the project. Donor and recipient agencies retain final authority, but project planning during implementation becomes increasingly more field oriented and directed to serving field needs and interests. This process is essential to encourage post-project sustainability of goals or outcomes. In instances where a recipient agency does not truly accept a donor's project design, has little or no commitment to the project's goals, or their obligations for funding and staffing during implementation, the axis of power cannot be shifted. In this case, it is unlikely that the project will succeed without intervention and possibly re-design and formulation of project goals.

This was not the case for CCWID Project. ACWF had been involved in developing the idea of a joint project, and matching ACWF goals with the CIDA WID efficiency approach (interview with Mme Lin, 2001). From the beginning, Women's Federation staff at several levels were involved on a participatory basis in planning and developing implementation processes. Every project, major activity and the budgets involved had to be approved by quarterly Management Committee Meetings on which ACWF and CIDA leaders were represented, as well as the executing agency (Association of Canadian Community Colleges). Annual review and policy level
decision-making involved CIDA Ottawa and China's ministry responsible for foreign funded projects. This format could not change through the five years of implementation, but flexibility within this format increased from year to year. Those in power made decisions based on recommendations of the co-managers, which involved participation of staff and field implementation teams across China. Chinese staff gradually grew comfortable with delegation, a necessity required by workload and developed through training. At the field level in rural townships and villages, and urban districts and neighbourhoods, the local Federation staff had full control of implementing their approved project proposals. Their proposals required collection wide input from target area governments, participation groups, and relevant specialists. This helped to prevent a top-down approach, and to ensure that the field project would meet the needs of target group participants. Quarterly, each project was monitored and financial disbursements cleared. Annual workshops and informal site visits provided opportunity for local Federations to share experiences and challenges faced, and to seek advice or support from their new network.

With almost no experience in managing a large development project, the Federation staff were receptive to introduction of management systems involving staff terms of reference and annual evaluations, delegation, international accounting systems, gender analysis, results based reporting, monitoring and evaluation. Several years into the project, the Chinese staff was fully competent, and played leadership roles at quarterly and annual meetings. They had assumed ownership of the project and its results. Staff were handling crises and challenges as they arose, and competently
managing the project. International audits and project evaluations proved their skills and ownership.

In the last two years, no staff recommendations made to the executing agency or management committee were denied and plans proposed approved with only minor changes. De facto power and control had tacitly shifted to the field. Institutional strengthening in project management through project staff and Federation staff involved throughout China had been achieved, accomplishing one of the project goals. Partnership relations were strong and mutually beneficial to CIDA as well as ACWF.
CHAPTER FOUR: CHINA DEVELOPMENT CONTEXT
AND METHODOLOGY

The chapter describes my research site, chosen from among the many rural areas targeted by the CCWID Project where poverty or near-poverty conditions prevailed. It explains the site selection and describes the research methodology for gaining research approval, choosing an interpreter, sample selection and field logistics, data collection and analysis, and concludes with research assumptions and limitations.

Site Selection

Minqing County is in south Shaanxi on the Huang Tu Plateau, an area with agriculturally poor geographic and climatic conditions. The population is 440,000, of which 210,000 are female. The County has five townships, fifteen administrative villages, and 440 natural villages. Grain has been the traditional crop, but over the last decade some farmers on the higher land in north Minqing have been moving into fruit growing which had substantially increased household incomes. Land and temperatures in north Minqing particularly suit apple growing, and perennial problems of inadequate rainfall are being addressed with irrigation systems that bring ground water directly to the roots of the trees. In the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s, modern fruit growing methods were being introduced, good varieties selected,

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4 Causes of proportionally lower female population rates in developing countries are attributed to maternal mortality rates, female vulnerability from lower nutrition and less access to health services than men, female child infanticide, and lower statistical reporting of female children. For information regarding control of women's reproductive rights, refer to Kabeer, 1994, pp. 187-222; and Mies, 1986, pp. 151-153.

5 Administrative villages provide some centralized functions for smaller surrounding villages (called 'natural villages').
and training provided to those farmers willing and able to risk switching from traditional subsistence cropping to cash-crop orchards.

I first visited Zhang Village in 1990. It became one of the earliest projects under CCWID Project (1990-1995). Zhang is a natural village, thirty-five kilometers from the county seat and ninety kilometers from the provincial capital, Xi’an. In 1998 the vice-head of the village committee estimated the population at about one thousand people, living in 240 households. I first visited the village in 1990 as a member of a management team of officials The All-China Women’s Federation, the Ministry of Foreign Economics and Trade, CIDA and the Association of Canadian Community Colleges. This team was conducting site inspection visits to meet with local officials and villagers. In 1992, I again visited Zhang village with two members from the CCWID Project Office in Beijing on invitation to talk with the training participants and inspect their courtyard gardens. My third visit was in June 1998 to conduct this research.

The CCWID project undertaken in Zhang village fell under a State-wide Women’s Federation “Courtyard Gardens” campaign which had been underway for some years. Under this campaign the Women’s Federation organized training for women farmers to use their household courtyards for intensive cash-cropping of vegetables, herbs and fruits, and to market their produce. Use of courtyards was a practical strategy, especially in areas with a shortage of arable land. It allowed village women easy access to their cash-crop gardens, and introduced them to small scale, low risk household enterprise in a market economy. The village was also typical of many others in that it was positioned to move from subsistence farming (with traditional
crop patterns and low but stable yields supporting area tax quotas) into cash cropping, and the development of domestic sidelines or microenterprises. Later, as the project took hold and the shift to orchard economies took place, household incomes in these villages received an added boost as men began to migrate to towns for work as labourers.

A primary reason for selecting this village was that, having visited twice, I was known by the villagers and familiar with the site and project. This enabled me to notice visible changes to the village. The Zhang Village project was successful in CIDA’s midterm evaluation in 1993 (as described in the previous chapter), but did not have to overcome the extraordinary challenges faced by some of the other CCWID Projects (e.g., remote location, lack of infrastructure or water, non-arable land or shortage of land, illiterate target group, and inexperienced Women’s Federation project managers).

In Guizhou Autonomous Region, Buyi minority women in a remote, mountainous area were cultivating gallnuts on sumac trees. About forty days a year were required for the work involved, and profits were very high. In a Hebei Province township, where soil was salinated and no longer fertile, women did piece-work for a ‘dragonhead’ factory, tripling and securing household incomes. In a dozen remote villages in Tibet, women developed a viable carpet production business. None of the women trainees selected by the villagers were literate, so the Tibetan Women’s Federation extended the training by several months, teaching literacy and numeracy in the evenings. In Ningxia Autonomous Region, a project was located in a Huizu (Chinese Moslem) community. The implementing team and the Huizu women involved had to battle the community’s
traditional role assignments that limited women’s work to their courtyard or house, and they had to win women’s right to control their earned income.

Like other CCWID project villages, Zhang Village at the time the project began was poor and household incomes were low. Arable land was scarce in the village, and yields from traditional crops suffered from periodic droughts or flooding. Although the village was located only twelve kilometers from the township city, there were no funds to support infrastructure development (e.g., access road to the city, wells, adequate housing, and village services). On my first visit to the village, the road was washed out and I hiked barefoot the last kilometer to the village. On the second visit, the jeep was able to bring us only to the outskirts of the village.

I had at my disposal all the original documents on the Zhang Village project, and these would provide accurate background information. My next step was to gain approval for the planned research.

**Gaining Research Approval**

I first consulted CIDA officials and was advised that their approval was not required since my research was not evaluating a CIDA project per se. CIDA development officers expressed interest in my research findings, however, since longitudinal and post-project review with participants is rarely undertaken. I agreed to make a presentation and/or share results at some later date. I also received approval to proceed from the Vice President (International Programs) of the Association of Canadian Community Colleges, Canadian Executing Agency for the CCWID project. At this point I completed the University of British Columbia’s required process for approval of my research by the Ethics Committee, and approval was granted.
Gaining access in China is not always easy, and is frequently denied. My reputation was established with the Federation, so Mme Hao who had run the CCWID Project in Shaanxi Province was able to organize approval for my field access to the village as an independent researcher. I submitted my research design, my curriculum vitae, and a research plan outlining required logistics to the head of the Shaanxi Province Women's Federation, and almost immediately, received official approval granting me access for the period March 31 to April 10, 1998. To lengthen my visit would have inconvenienced the Women's Federation and village people supporting my research.

Previous experience warned me that several official representatives and an interpreter would be assigned to accompany me throughout my visit. I had requested that only Mme Hao, a Shaanxi Province Women Federation divisional leader who over the years had become a respected friend, and an interpreter of my own choice join me in the field visit, at my own expense. Mme Hao was familiar with the CCWID Projects in the Province. She is open, honest, hard working, efficient at record-keeping, devoted in helping grassroots women, and well-liked and trusted by them. I also believed that she would most enjoy, and learn from, the qualitative methods being used. She was less inclined to the traditional manner of officials' top-down control of participant responses and the statistical methods of reporting more common in China.

Her appointment was approved by the Women's Federation as I had invited her to attend each meeting with me and on the convenience of the villagers with whom I would be meeting. The length of the visit was based on my being able to spend at least four hours with each woman participant in her home. The Federation assisted with
local arrangements. When I first arrived, I met with the Shaanxi Provincial Women’s Federation leadership to discuss the research and related women’s issues, and again on exit to debrief and to thank them for the excellent logistics, and high level of cooperation I received. We discussed women’s spending priorities, and their ownership of orchard management. This was an informal meeting with women I had known for five or more years.

Selection of the Interpreter

I had asked Mme Hao to assist in finding a female, gender-aware, professional interpreter – someone who was hard-working, and would relate well with the grassroots women. Karen was an English language teacher at the local university, trained by American teachers on term appointments at her university. She had no previous connection with the village, with the Women’s Federation, or with the government. Karen was very interested to be involved. She respected village women, and was comfortable in rural conditions. My contract with her required her to uphold confidentiality and commit for the full field research period. On arriving in Xi’An City, Shaanxi Province’s capital, I selected her from among several applicants based on her fluency in English, willingness to work long hours, and interest in the research. Before undertaking the field research, we reviewed vocabulary together and clarified the meanings of various terms.

Karen was among the top three interpreters of about one hundred interpreters I have worked with over the past twelve years. Her interpretation was almost simultaneous, and she duplicated the moods and tones of the speakers. Also, she was careful with nuances of meanings, was tireless, enthusiastic and always interested.
While in the field we developed a system of flagging words or sayings which do not interpret easily, have more than one meaning, and discussed the meanings of these later with Mme Hao and others. Karen was well liked by the villagers and participants.

**Selection of Participants and Field Logistics**

My research focused primarily on twenty-one village women who volunteered to talk to me, and eight of their husbands who were added at their wish or mine. I considered this number manageable from a research point of view based on several factors. Time approved for my village visit (March 31 to April 10) was a consideration. There is a point in the data collection process at which little new information can be gained. Information that has been collected has proven representative of a group, and further data collection then becomes repetitive. From my years of experience meeting and talking with village women throughout China, I anticipated reaching the saturation point in responses within this number. If I did not, there was agreement among the villagers to begin meetings at dawn and continue into the night, or return at some later date to continue the interviews. I was also cognizant that extending my research much beyond about thirty people would increase complexity in compilation of research data and possibly also subsequent analysis.

Mme Hao and I together set criteria for selecting participants. Participants must have been previously involved in the CCWID courtyard gardens’ project. Since the research was intended to discover in Zhang Village the impacts of women’s increased incomes and the effectiveness of a WID efficiency approach, participants must have increased their incomes. I later was told, once in the field, that there was only one poor family in the village (a single mother of two children who was blind), and that all other
villagers had increased incomes in transition to orchards. Given this, selections would be representative of the range in incomes, educational level, land allocations, and other factors. Participants had to volunteer, and not be pushed or coerced to participate. They had to be willing to discuss openly their challenges, successes, and failures. Working with the village level volunteer representative of the Women’s Federation, Mme Hao organized an open meeting of village women involved in the project. About thirty attended, including the Township Women’s Federation project officer. Those attending discussed the criteria and selected participants whom they believed would be frank and interested to meet with a foreigner. They included several in the selected group who faced challenges such as illiteracy, late entry into the project, household labour shortage (e.g., migrant husband and children too young to assist), and other responsibilities absorbing their time (e.g., caring for sick in-law, full-time teaching position). This was a useful addition as it enabled me to increase my awareness of the problems and challenges some women faced.

I was also interested to meet privately with some husbands of women participants (including the village leader). The purpose of meeting with eight husbands of participants was: (a) to involve them, as some were curious and wanted to be involved; (b) to learn whether their attitudes were supportive or opposed to changes within family relationships which had occurred as a result of their wives’ increased incomes; and (c) to discover if their views conflicted or agreed with those expressed by participants. The husbands were selected by the local group, in consultation with their wives. For most, their husbands were working off-farm and unavailable. A few women wanted their husbands present, since they regarded their
selection as an honour their husbands should witness. Other participants respected my request to meet privately with them.

I wanted to protect subjects from any vulnerability or risk they might perceive their participation to incur so did not record discussions on tape. Previous experience in China made me cautious about using recorders. They can be regarded with suspicion and mistrust, and can bias responses toward what is safe, especially on sensitive topics. This was in the interest of maintaining confidentiality, and was recommended to me by other researchers engaged in related topics in China. As Margery Wolf (1985) notes, “Those of us who work in China know that a sudden change in the political climate could make last year’s adventure in cross-cultural understanding this year’s treason” (p. 121). For me, taping the interviews was a risk not worth taking. Instead, I took word-for-word shorthand notes, which enabled me to retain an ethnographer’s path. Confidentiality of these notes written in Pitman shorthand was assured, since it is doubtful anyone in China could transcribe this now out-dated form of shorthand. I typed the day’s notes in the evenings on return to my room, recording conversations word-for-word, as well as observations of wealth indicators, special features in the houses or surrounding grounds, conversations with other villagers met during the day, demonstrated relationships between family members, activities, and my personal thoughts. My computer notes were also protected with an access password. During and prior to my field research, I received some information of a confidential nature that may have in some small way influenced my opinions and conclusions, but which I am ethically bound not to reveal.

On arriving in the village, I met with the participants, village leaders, and others interested in the research. Organizers had set up two meetings, one on either side of
the village, to allow more opportunity for interaction. I described the purpose and process of my research, and explained the University of British Columbia guidelines concerning ethical research. I encouraged the group to raise any topics they wished to discuss, and asked for advice and suggestions. I explained that any participant could withdraw at any point during my visit. I promised confidentiality of our discussions. The participants reacted strongly, one commenting: “Why would we want our conversations with you confidential? We are proud of what we have done!” Another: “You helped us! We trust you and are happy to welcome you back to our village and homes!” Another said: “We don’t have to phone your University to complain if we don’t like what you do. We would just tell the village head or Women’s Federation to discontinue the meetings and send you packing out of the village.” I discussed the purpose of the ethics guidelines further, and the group agreed in my use of pseudonyms for the county, village, and everyone involved to be used in future in any written works or public presentations.

During the meetings, those selected agreed to spend the time needed with me in their homes (estimated as about four hours), to explain their work before CCWID training and since training had been completed, and to describe any impacts their increased incomes had had on themselves, their households, and the village. I emphasized the importance of their being frank and truthful in the discussions, explaining that if they were not, my research would be useless. I asked that the meeting with each participant be private. After some discussion, some of the women in the group indicated that they might want their husbands or mother-in-laws to be present during the discussion. This was an honor some wanted to share with others in
the households which would not, they thought, restrict frank discussion. I mentioned also that my research was a personal undertaking, and not funded by CIDA or any other party to which I would be accountable. They agreed to describe major challenges and issues which have confronted (or are confronting) them, how income spending decisions are made within their household and priorities ranked, and their perception of their position and power in the household and community.

Subsequently the group set up a meeting schedule for each participant in her home, with only my interpreter and Mme Hao accompanying me. My endorsement by the Provincial Women’s Federation, and my support in the field by Mme Hao, gave me face and facilitated participants’ trust and free discussion. She took part in the meetings with participants only to facilitate discussion and draw out problems and difficulties. It also helped that the women had benefited from the CCWID project. Some recalled my earlier visit, and I was viewed as an “old friend” who had helped them. I realized that this former relationship would tend to bias responses, a difficulty I would strive to overcome but which would remain a research limitation. Participants would regard Mme Hao and me as representing the governments which sponsored the earlier project, and probably assume that I had a vested interest in hearing about success. Chinese courtesy to “foreign guests” observed by others (Bond, 1991; Bossen, 2002; Jacka, 1997; and Judd, 1994) focuses on positive aspects and, at least initially, inhibits frank discussion of problems and concerns. I am able to reflect, therefore, only what they have told me.

Once my meetings with the individual women began, I soon found that they were interested in my research and the process. Many commented that they were very
proud, even honored, to have been included in the participant group. I learned that consultation and involvement strengthens and empowers. As I began my meetings with each subject, accompanied by Mme Hao and my interpreter, several mentioned that my coming from Canada to meet with them, and my interest in their lives, had given them encouragement and pride in their work. No doubt the presence of my well-respected friend, Mme Hao, influenced their feelings of accomplishment.

By the end of the second day of interviews, news of our presence and the research had spread through the community. Those with whom we met had “given me face” and villagers became interested in talking with me. Women, often with their children, would wait at the roadside and talk to us as we left one participant household and headed for the next. On these walks through the village, a few women (who were not participants) invited us into their homes, and we were happy to oblige with a brief visit. These were useful encounters to informally cross-check information received from other sources and to hear general opinions on village needs and issues.

Meetings were also held with village leaders and the local Women’s Federation representatives. On the second day, some of the research participants decided that we should lunch with them daily to provide opportunity for interaction with more villagers. These were casual luncheons, with people dropping in (often with a dish of food) for informal discussions. Usually one or two of the village committee attended the lunches, and generally about fifteen villagers attended. Those dropping in were not participants, but friendly villagers who appeared to be curious and interested in meeting us. This open access at lunch and through roadside conversations with villagers contributed to my acceptance by the villages, and to my understanding of the
research background, context and village life. On a few occasions, groups of villagers would collect around us, contributing to a discussion on some local issue (e.g., priority development areas, village values). Days in the field started at 7:00 a.m. and ended usually before 11:00 p.m., with the meetings with participants scheduled in their homes from 8:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. During the late evening meal with Mme Hao, a few others, and my interpreter, we debriefed on the day’s logistics, checked and confirmed understandings and emerging themes. Each day, I reviewed my notes and transcribed these on my computer.

Before leaving the village, I held a final meeting with those involved to confirm major themes, ideas and findings arising from the conversations in the homes, urging participants to advise me of important aspects neglected or misunderstood. At this meeting I donated some money towards building of their new school, as villagers had identified this as their top priority for village development.

Data Collection, Confidentiality, and Analysis

For this research I required a qualitative approach in which major themes major themes would emerge from subjects’ narratives and discourses. My research topic required that the voices of women who had participated in a CCWID income generating project must be heard. I viewed women participants as change agents, not submissive victims in patriarchal families and communities. In discussion with each participant, I tried to create an agenda for her to shape the content of conversation and to identify themes and issues of significance to her. I had general topics for discussion (e.g., participants’ spending priorities and control of discretionary income, changes if any in participants’ perceptions of self-worth, gender division of labour in household and farm
work, pressures from increased workload) to cover at meetings, but these and other topics were raised through open-ended questions to enable participants to reflect and digress if they wished. I kept an open, non-judgmental approach to encourage narrative, and asked for clarifications when needed. Research themes explored were, therefore, primarily through women's individual narratives, rather than group discussions. Village women involved had the opportunity to express their own views, needs and priorities for development and change, and to define what really mattered most for them. Consultation and involvement strengthens and empowers.

In the process of identifying emerging themes and patterns, I compared responses across individuals. Observations (e.g., household and village wealth indicators, and land use) helped confirm other information collected. The informal lunch-time get-togethers provided opportunities to cross-check key details received through the household meetings. By the end of my village visit, I was able to check such details with at least three sources, usually individuals at different levels or from different contexts. Altogether during the ten days in the village, about one hundred and twenty hours were spent interviewing participants, talking with villagers, and over twenty-two hours in discussions with village leaders and Women's Federation colleagues.

On return to Canada, I again reviewed my field notes together with my computer transcriptions, flagging major themes derived from my findings and filing these separately on the computer. After further review I settled on key themes. I continued to review the literature related to these topics.
The importance of my research lies not only in its potential contribution to WID theory and planning, but also to a methodology which involves grassroots women as research participants, with audible and important voice – an experience from which they may choose to increase self-awareness, self-determination, and conscientization (Freire, 1990).

On entering the field I assumed: (a) that the participants and the village community would cooperate; (b) that I could win participants’ trust and confidence so that they would speak freely and frankly; and (c) that some women might not place much importance on the indirect effects of income increases (such as gender equality or gender division of labour so important to Western WID advocates). I also knew that as a researcher I was an outsider to this village culture, a development worker, and not a “China expert.” I went into the field hoping to listen and learn the differences between the participants’ perspectives and mine, and that I could appropriately reflect their primary issues and reflections. What I did not expect was the welcome and cooperation I received in the village, and the degree of interest and honour it seemed to bestow on my research participants. I also did not quite anticipate the extent to which they openly shared details of their private lives, their thoughts, and their attitudes.

Limitations of the Research

The themes identified in the research findings which follow are specific to the village where I did my research. The length of time I spent in the village, and the three to four hours with each participant, proved sufficient for my research purpose. This was not anthropological research, and I make no claims of being an expert on Zhang Village. My research reflects discourse with participants and villagers, the frankness
and truth of which cannot be assumed. In three instances, women participants had invited their husbands to sit in during our discussion (in one case to boost her confidence as she had not previously met with a foreigner, and in two cases to honour their wives’ accomplishments). Great Zhang, who had first introduced apple orchards to the village, invited his wife into the meeting in recognition of her strong contribution to his accomplishments. Participants frank discussion may have been inhibited in some cases.

I believe the impact of different models of programming is best reflected upon in the context of a variety of particular case studies. The characteristics of the participants, my background, the participants’ relationship to me, the development path in the field site, the timing of the research during opening and reform of China’s economy, and the changes occurring since I undertook the field interviews are particular to this researcher and this village. Zhang Village, however, shared some important characteristics with other villages in the CCWID Project, and the findings have significance for understanding how WID programming affects women in other sites.

The twenty-one women and eight men research participants in Zhang Village were helpful, appeared frank, and openly directed the discussions. They shared information of a confidential nature which was not requested and, as their histories unfolded in their narratives, described personal aspects of their lives. Information, such as Mulan’s trading expedition to Heilongjiang and the women’s development of a cooperative village system for marketing (described in Chapter 5), was verified in conversation with others. I have confidence in what I was told concerning household
spending priorities as these were easily observable; and women's roles in orchard management and marketing that was mentioned by many villagers. The manner in which village values affect women's lives was raised in discussions with both female and male participants, and became a focus of open discussion among villagers at several lunch time get-togethers and on the street. Women's increase in self-confidence and pride in their achievements was evident throughout the visit (as I remembered my 1990 and 1992 meetings with some of the participants), and as participants described their past lives. These are important topics for this case study on a WID efficiency approach.

Topics covered reflect Zhang Village in 1998, and the perspectives of the research participants. The reader should be aware that I focused on women's voices, what they wanted me to hear, and what was important to their lives as emerged in the narratives, or in village group discussions. Quite possibly, sensitive topics were not mentioned. Also, because my research explored the intended impacts of the WID efficiency approach (i.e., increasing women's income contributes to their empowerment), participants were selected from among women who had experienced a range of income increase. Zhang Village's quick transition from poverty to prosperity, however, is not unique in China. Innumerable villages have increased residents' incomes because they developed a village-wide focus on a single industrial, commercial, or agricultural activity that was economically successful.
CHAPTER FIVE: WOMEN'S WORK IN THE VILLAGE
AND THE MEANING OF MONEY

Woman-in-Development assumes that the gender division of labour and women's means of gaining financial independence have considerable influence on women's emancipation, position in society, and power they hold. This chapter explores this assumption in the context of research findings on the impact of women's income generation on Zhang Village. It examines the manner in which gender work role assignments played out in the village, including changes in women's workload and their 'double burden'; gender role assignments; women's ability and satisfaction with their income generation work; the profitability of their income generation activities and their spending priorities.

Theoretical Framework

The literature suggests that modernization of pre-industrial economies deeply impacts women in both negative and positive ways, and most often leads to a gender division of labour which disadvantages women. Structural adjustment, free trade, export-led industrialization, urbanization, and feminizing a low-paid labour force benefit some women, but "most barely manage to survive" (Reddock, 2000). Aid interventions can either improve or worsen women's condition.

Marxist theory, widely held in China, views male dominance as more economically, than culturally, rooted. To end oppression women must assume active roles in production, as the "free development of each is the condition for the free development of all" (Marx quoted in Du Jinpeng, 1995). In recent years, the Women's Federation has
updated the division of labour theory represented in an old revolutionary slogan “women can do what men can do” to “men can do what women can do” in a push to socialize household tasks and domestic duties. Marxist theory does not account for the separate but inter-related gender roles in subsistence level peasant families, and women’s control in these families over allocation of household resources.

Bradley’s alternate thesis (1989) is that gender labour divisions are not a result of economics, but rather of persistent gender ideologies which adapt to changing labour force needs. When male labour is scarce (e.g., in wartime or periods of rapid industrial expansion), women are brought into previously male-stereotyped jobs. When male labour is surplus, “housewiferization” (Mies’ term, 1986) occurs, and women are pushed back into the home where society dictates their primary (or sole) responsibility is caring for their husbands and children.

Chinese experience suggests support for Bradley’s thesis. It has been argued that women were brought into the Revolution by the Communist Party because their support was needed, and subsequent legislation stressed the importance of gender-free productive roles because women’s help was needed to rebuild the Nation. Recent economic reforms, however, have thrown vast numbers out of work by closing bankrupt State-owned enterprises and sent unemployment rates soaring. A State-approved ‘back to home movement’ (to lay-off women in order to provide more jobs for men) ended more than a decade ago with widespread and strong resistance from women and the Federation, but the idea persists in some areas. Gendered labour force roles are increasing in China causing Chinese feminists serious concerns about the welfare of current and future generations of women. Increased opportunities for women in some fields (e.g., service
industry), and their potential for higher incomes (Li, 1997) have resulted concurrent with
discrimination in hiring women (Institute of Population Studies, 1994) and increased
importance being placed on factors such as women's appearance and build (Li, 1997).
Increased feminization of agriculture is also occurring as males in rural households
migrate to urban areas for work as labourers.

Worldwide, peasant labour in pre-modern agricultural economies share some
common gendered characteristics (Bradley, 1989). In productive tasks, men's and women's
roles are complementary and family division of labour is horizontal (i.e., women and men
help each other in their households and fields, and although some tasks may be assigned
primarily to men and some to women, status of the task is not based on gender). Generally
men undertake heavier or more dangerous work, or tasks at a distance from households
such as herding or maintaining terraces and irrigation channels. Women stay near their
households caring for children while tending small animals and vegetable gardens,
collecting fuel and water, weaving mats and repairing homes. Roles blur in times of
workload stress, and also differ according to prevailing cultures and religions.

Prior to modernization traditional peasant societies are usually patriarchal, in
that decision-making is the responsibility usually of the household's oldest adult male,
but paradoxically gynocentric – within households "everything centres round skills,
knowledge and activities of the woman" (Bradley, 1989) who manages the household
and hence family income. Gender roles are separate, but equal, becoming hierarchically
stratified only during modernization. Scott (1976) portrays pre-modern peasant
communities as living cooperatively at subsistence levels, "subject to the vagaries of
weather and the claims of outsiders." Stabilizing a precarious livelihood and decreasing
vulnerability is more important than increasing incomes. When modernization touches such communities, the need for cash increases – to purchase basic items such as oil, salt, soap and matches; to pay for taxes, children's schooling, and medical services; to buy tools, high-yield seeds and chemicals. As modernization deepens, industries are drawn to remote inland communities, attracted by cheap and readily available labour. The need for cash causes male out-migration, leaving women in charge of the farm and feminizing agriculture. As primary producers in fragile environments, those women who remain find survival precarious – yet some women prefer farming life alongside their young children to joining mainstream urban modernization by working in polluted towns. Women to some extent decide for themselves and their children the path of their lives. In China gaps have widen between 'haves' and 'have nots', particularly between urban and rural peoples (Goa and Chi, 1997; Chen Jinhua, 1996), encouraged by Deng Xiaoping slogans, "To be rich is glorious" and "Some will get rich first", an economic approach Kenneth Galbraith has described as 'the horse-and-sparrow theory' (feed the horse enough oats and some will pass through to the road for the sparrow).

The process of modernization confronts rural women with difficulties touching most aspects of their lives, testing their competence, self-esteem, and sometimes threatening their family livelihood. Challenges include: (a) disruption in community life, and breakdown in family structures of the past; (b) cash crops replace subsistence crops, increasing dependency on markets and ending self-sufficiency; (c) need for cash grows, but women lack skills, knowledge and tools to improve farm productivity and are risk adverse; (d) domestic sidelines are developed but earn small profits because
women lack experience, training, often numeracy/literacy skills, or are simply too
tired or devoid of ideas on how to juggle increasing workload, declining profits, and
shifting or saturated markets; (e) traditionally prescribed women’s roles, isolation, and
lack of knowledge may hinder women’s advancement and limit their options.
Feminization of agriculture and of poverty is increasing. Women in China have
become a necessity in rural household production, and their responsibilities have
shifted to cover all aspects of farm production (Dezhi & Chunfeng, 1995). Clearly well-
defined development programs can help women meet these challenges, and prevent
their sinking into a vortex of poverty.

Returning to Zhang Village

On my first visit to Zhang Village in 1990, the rain had washed out the access
road to the village and my group slogged to the village barefoot. The muddy road into
the village was well rutted, and had not been graded in many years. Most homes in the
village were small, built of wattle and daub, and surrounded by large courtyards
containing a scattering of chickens or a few pigs raised for household consumption.
Surrounding fields were seeded in winter wheat and corn rotation, and there were a
few small fields of apple trees. Village living conditions for most were at or just above
subsistence level. Women’s annual incomes for the area were reported by the Shaanxi
Women’s Federation as 139 yuan (approximately $22 Canadian). In rural Shaanxi,
65.97% of women earn from 1 to 50 yuan a month (Sha Jicai, 1994). Zhang villagers
worked hard just to ‘fill bellies and keep warm in winter,’ spending little on what were
then regarded as luxuries such as nutrition, clothes, homes, health care and farm tools.
My second visit was in 1991, to meet with village participants of CCWID courtyard
gardens project conducted by the Shaanxi Women’s Federation. My methodology required discovering from participants the effects of the project intervention, and specifically examining what changes had resulted as their incomes increased to gendered division of labour within their households, to their lifestyle, to their level of self-confidence and power to influence others within their households and the village.

On my return in 1998 to conduct my research, I met first with the Minqing County Party Secretary. He boasted that Minqing was now a ‘model county and a major for apple production base in the whole country’. The County’s early entry over the previous decade into fruit growing gave the County a favorable and profitable position as markets expanded to meet increased demand. At this point in time the County’s apples were being sold across China and exported to Thailand, Vietnam and Russia. Minqing’s Party Secretary reported that the average annual per capita income in the County by 1998 had grown to 1,490 yuan (about $224 Canadian), and by Year 2003, he predicted, Minqing would be the strongest and richest county in the Province with average per capita annual income of 2,000 yuan. By 2010, average per capita incomes were expected to be 5,000 yuan a year. His face shone with pride as he predicted the future wealth!

Women played a major role in fruit production, he noted, and did most of the growing, storing and packaging of fruit. All fruit sellers were women, because they bargain harder than men for higher prices from fruit traders coming to the village. Orchard development in Minqing County, and women’s important role in fruit growing, was increasingly evident in subsequent discussions with the County and
township Women’s Federation. Zhang Village, the research site, played an important role in introducing orchard fruits in Minqing County.

When I entered Zhang Village in 1998 to conduct my research, I found that the village had changed. My visit was welcomed by villagers with an atmosphere of excitement and celebration. Village leaders pointed to the access road from the township seat that was at last in initial building stages, and to some village streets paved as a result of contributions from wealthy residents. Orchards had replaced the grain fields, and many villagers had built very large handsome houses. The village leaders, the research participants and the spouses who had gathered on my entry to the village were proud and happy to describe how their transition from wheat/corn rotation to apple and pear growing had changed the village and their lives. Since my first visit in 1990, orchards had become the village’s major source of income.

It was the inspiration and skill of one man in the village who was credited with the success of Zhang Village’s orchards and present wealth. Great Zhang (a nickname of respect used by villagers) grew up in a very poor family with his widowed mother. His village gave him money to go to school, and eventually he graduated from the Agricultural School in Ancun with a specialty in raising silk worms. His education, he said, gave him confidence and in 1965 while still single he came up with an idea that growing apple trees could be very profitable. He sought the advice of government agriculturalists, and developed his skills. Under the household responsibility system that gave farmers the right to select and manage their own crops, Great Zhang, still drawn by apple growing, planted apple trees on part of his land in 1983, the seeds from which he planted to raise saplings.
It was a huge, risky investment! My wife gave me a lot of encouragement and help. She knew my dream and that I had studied the skills. For the first few years we were the only ones in the village to grow apple trees. Nobody wanted to follow us. I convinced the village administration to allocate me a small experimental plot to grow saplings for others. At first other villagers were not interested in my experiment, so to encourage them my family gave twenty saplings each to several young families willing to take the risk. As the saplings grew so did profits for us all. (Great Zhang, HH#16)

Soon interest, and envy, grew as Zhang and these other families' incomes increased. Apple growing was proving to be less labour-intensive and much more profitable than the traditional wheat/corn crops. He began teaching other villagers, and those from households better able to accept risk began to gradually shift from wheat/corn rotation to apple trees. Some also grew pear trees.

The poorest, most vulnerable households, however, remained risk adverse, unable to chance reduced earnings from crops gradually converted to fruit trees which required three or four years to mature and earn full profits. Through the Shaanxi Women's Federation project (1991) under the CIDA Women-in-Development Project, women were assisted and trained in skills in intensive cash-cropping and marketing vegetables and fruits in their otherwise uncultivated courtyards. Resulting incomes from the courtyard gardens easily compensated for the gradual loss of low-profit crops as crop land was converted to fruit trees. Cash-cropping fruits, vegetables and herbs in courtyard gardens proved also to be a less risky introduction to the market economy for poor families. As orchard profits grew, village courtyard gardens were discontinued as large homes were built.
The changes wealth brought to Zhang Village in the period 1990 to 1998 affected not just the village appearance, but also the quality of life of the villagers. I met with Run (HH#1), a retired mathematics teacher. She described her impressions of the village when she returned in 1995 after an absence of two decades.

*The village had changed completely! Now the people are very happy and getting along with each other. No longer were theft and home security a problem. Children attend school now, rather than spend their days working in the fields....Twenty years ago we lived in a small shed made of straw, ate poorly, often without salt, oil or spices, and were always cold in winter. Now we live so well, in a nice house that old people say, “When I die, I can close my eyes comforted that the world I leave is much better place than the world I entered.”*

Run explained that self-confidence had risen in the village and everyone was very busy in the orchards, some too busy to take care of the children who were running around unattended in the village. The village leader approached her about opening a kindergarten.

*It was a great idea! I had the time and the energy, plus I wanted to contribute in some way, and to help make people’s dreams come true. A kindergarten could solve problems for the village and the parents. I decided that my contribution to my village was to open a kindergarten. I take care of the children three hours in the mornings and three hours in the afternoons. Children return home for lunch. The kindergarten gives children a better preparation for education and eases their way into primary school. I don’t need money as I have some fruit trees too, so charges are minimal and everyone can afford it. Anyway, education is more important than money.*
The village provided the equipment, and Run was running a kindergarten in her home for forty children. News spread and demand increased, so she opened another kindergarten on the other side of the village for seventy children. She supervises the staff she has hired to run it.

Apple-grower Great Zhang continued to teach villagers in growing apples and pears, advising growers on the village loud speaker system when to use a particular pesticide, or when to fertilize, or when and how to carefully nip buds. He taught those developing the most expertise to take over his role, while he traveled to neighbouring counties and provinces to teach others to grow apples. This one man's inspiration and initiative to grow fruit had totally changed the quality of life in the village, transforming the village from poverty to wealth in about a decade.

This example of rapid transformation of a village economy, also experienced in other Chinese villages, raised interesting Women-in-Development questions. Many studies cite the dangers that developing countries' economic growth may have for women's position and status, resulting in their exploitation and increased workloads (Dixon-Mueller, 1985; Jahan, 1995). From a WID perspective, changes in the gender division of labour, women's workload assignments and increases in tasks, women's income increases and control over incomes earned, their spending priorities, and their level of self-confidence and satisfaction with their lives are all important to explore. If the family is indeed the root of female oppression, as theorized by Marx and Engels (Andors, 1983), had the improved village economy altered family relationships in any way? The following section examines these issues.
Women's Work, Men's Work: The Feminization of Fruit Production

There's a real difference in the roles: women can do these jobs themselves, but men can't.  

Men can't live without women! (Fen HH#2)

An examination of the gender division of labour, who profits from the returns of labour, gender comparison of work hours, and the relative prestige communities attach to particular tasks are useful indicators for assessing the impact of a project focusing on women’s economic activity. Other research indicates that the gender division of labour changes as incomes increase (Bradley, 1989). At subsistence levels, men and women tend to work together at separate but equally important tasks, with roles blurring in times of workload stress. Power relationships are complementary, rather than male dominated, and the family system of production is horizontal. In Zhang Village at the beginning of broad-scale orchard development, the risks and decisions were mutually discussed and shared by women and men. As women participants looked back on their earlier years, they described the division of labour between wife and husband.

As a couple, we helped each other.... Even on the hottest days, we worked together in the field. (Chengong HH# 7)

In 1987 we moved. We were very poor. My husband and I did everything ourselves working long, long hours and into the night. After dark we worked in the home, making steam bread twice each day because we had to feed the family and the guard dog... In the hardest times I cooked dinner and right after dinner my husband was so exhausted that he went to bed. One time I felt ok, so went back out to weed. At 3:00 a.m. the dog barked hearing my noise outside. My husband woke up, and found me still working in the field.
He led me back to bed, and went out in the field himself to carry on with our work.

(Baodung HH#8)

Describing the gender division of agricultural labour in China, Jacka (1997) notes men’s roles traditionally involved heavier work such as ploughing, clearing land and cutting down trees, and were distinct from women’s roles which were considered as ‘lighter’. When Zhang Village households initially began orchard development, men and women worked equally hard, with men undertaking traditional male tasks requiring strength (e.g., preparing land and planting trees), or tasks considered heavy or potentially dangerous (e.g., hauling hoses and applying fertilizer and pesticides, and pruning large branches). Women’s work involved repetitive tasks associated with orchard maintenance, tasks requiring longer hours, and endurance rather than brute strength. Women helped men with men’s physically heavy tasks, and men helped women with women’s tasks that men considered boring. This was not true of all villages. Xiao (HH#14) indicated that orchard work was ‘men’s work’ in her natal village, and ‘women’s work’ was in and around the house.

By 1998, gender roles in orchard production were segregated in most families. In Spring women tilled soil around the trees, constantly checked to nip off unwanted buds to ensure larger fruits, and attached bottles with flower sprays to cross-fertilize one pear tree with another. In summer, women staked branches, pruned shoots, peeled bark strips around tree trunks to retard growth, checked for insects, and watered trees. Some grafted trees. In fall, they gathered fallen apples to sell to the local apple juice factory, or made vinegar or juice for their households. Women harvested fruit, wrapped each in
plastic net casing to prevent bruising, and packaged these in boxes for safe storage until sold.

In 1998, male participants identified women’s work in the orchards as requiring great patience, diligence and loving care, and being unsuitable for men who found such repetitive tasks too monotonous to hold their attention. Women’s ‘nimble fingers’ and smaller hands, they said, were better suited than men’s for the painstaking daily nipping of tiny buds in spring. “Men like to do the things which take only a short time” (Ling, HH#3). With few exceptions women agreed and described men as “incapable at these tasks”, “careless”, “irresponsible”, “inattentive.” Women “were the main force” and did everything (Yuying, HH #21).

Once the orchards became established, men’s tasks diminished and women’s tasks increased. Women took management responsibility for, and control of, the orchards. Most women I spoke with were possessive about their management roles in household fruit production. They did not want husbands to ‘interfere,’ and believed that men ‘would be no where without women’ (Fen, HH #2). Men also preferred not to lose face by doing ‘women’s work,’ a common concern in other countries according to Sen and Grown (1987).

Women do most of the work now. They are more careful than men in many tasks. Men don’t have patience. And women can do, and do do, men’s physically heavy work now. (Fen, HH#2)

I work in the field. Without me there, my husband can’t do anything! (Mulan, HH#6)

Women work harder than men, and do all the field work. Men aren’t as capable, but can do the tasks requiring strength, like applying fertilizer, pruning, carrying heavy things.
They spend less time in the field than women because they are not patient. They get bored and wander off. Women are the main force now....I don’t mind working harder as I have more power. Women do eighty per cent of the orchard work now: both tasks and decisions. (Yuying, HH#21, apple grower and women’s representative on the village committee)

When winter comes, it is free time for the villagers so men go out to work to the towns or cities. Some work in companies. It depends on their technical skills and ability. Men’s jobs in the orchards are pulling the heavy fertilizer hose around. It’s a half inch in diameter and very long – takes three people sometimes to drag this around. But now most of us have access to a large machine pulled by a small three-wheel tractor that women can use. Men sometimes do some of the pruning, and some occasionally help weed. Men like to do tasks they can finish in a short time that require low technical skills. Women do careful work that’s often on-going and determines an orchard’s success, so most things are done by women. Men are best able to do a man’s role, and women best able to do a woman’s role: both according to ability. (Ling, HH#3)

It is most important for the women to grasp the technology, plant good quality apples so they can meet competition. If the apples aren’t good, they can’t be sold. There isn’t much difference between men’s and women’s roles now because women can do very heavy work like fertilizing. Sometimes women get rid of the men [as helpers] because they are careless. For example, women pick apples better than men, because they are careful. Men do it too quickly. Women store the apples too. Clean them and put them into bags. Men aren’t careful and may damage the apples. Women play the chief role and men act as helpers because they are careless and slower. There’s a real difference in the roles: women
can do these jobs themselves, but men can't. Men can't live without women! (She laughs.) (Fen, HH#2)

As incomes suddenly increased, men's heavy work was mechanized with the purchase of power saws to prune large branches, and small tractors to haul hosing and transport harvest from orchards. This enabled women to take on work previously done by men, and in some cases to manage orchard profits and spending.

All the work usually done by men can be done now by women. (Mulan, HH#18)

I can do everything in the orchard, because the heavy work is mechanized now. (Ying, HH#3)

When women needed help, their increased incomes enabled them to hire farmers from poorer, neighbouring wheat-growing villages. Their ability to hire others clearly demonstrated their increased social power related to their position within their households and in their communities.

With village women responsible for the orchards and men's responsibilities reduced, men who previously worked full-time in the field now sought work in towns and nearby cities, returning home evenings or weekends. More than fifty per cent of participant husbands, by 1998, worked outside the village. A few had held off-farm jobs for years (e.g., school teacher, factory worker), and others found jobs suited to their interests and skills (e.g., taxi driver, trucker, trader, construction worker). According to the village leader, men's out-migration for work had become common in the village.

Most of the men work outside the village now, 'retired' from farm work (Fen, HH#2)

Two women participants (Ying, HH#5; Chengong, HH#7) said that their husbands were better educated, the 'brains' and 'planners' in their households. For
these two women, their pride lay in being capable of successfully managing the orchards on their own, freeing husbands to move to other more satisfying work. Both women had earned titles and status as ‘technicians’ within the village, and devoted much of their time to training other women in orchard management. Two other women participants whose husbands worked off-farm described their pride and confidence in being able to undertake both men’s and women’s roles (Lixi, HH#12; Baoding, HH#8).

China’s “floating population” (as urbanized rural migrants are identified) is predominantly male, and reported as 31 million in 1990 and 84 million in 1995 (UNDP, 1998). They fill lower-level jobs in construction, manufacturing, etc., and their migration is motivated by money and family income security through diversification. Croll (1996) notes studies that indicate “the poor migrate to increase incomes and the less poor generally to leave the village and acquire employment experience and skills.” For Zhang Village’s out-migrants the latter was usually the case, as out-migration followed an increase in household incomes and reduction in ‘men’s work’. Some in the village considered urban work held more prestige and status than farm work (Fen HH#2, Chengong, HH #7, Fengxi, HH #15). Urban jobs were regarded as ‘more modern’ and ‘sophisticated’ by some, and more secure and less vulnerable to market fluctuations than farm work (Yuying, HH#21). Others, however, considered city jobs unstable because of lay-offs and rising unemployment caused by China’s economic restructuring and closing down across the country of unprofitable state-owned enterprises. All agreed that urban jobs had increased and diversified household incomes. With few exceptions, however, individual orchard profits were surpassing urban incomes.
Male migration increases women's workday, but the women said this was not an issue for them. They worked harder and for longer hours in the 1980s when they were grain farming. Lixi, who teaches at a school in a village nearby, described her interest and time in the orchard as absorbing her time “as a sponge absorbs water.”

I'm up at 5:30 a.m. and to bed at 11:00 p.m. daily. I usually do in two days what takes three days for others.

She beamed with pride when she said this, obviously pleased with her endurance, ability and strength for multi-tasking. Several women noted their long hours of work during peak periods in the orchard, but were proud, and not complaining. Great Zhang’s wife, Ying (HH#16) said she was up at 6:00 a.m. and goes to bed after 11:00 p.m.

Marketing, traditionally a male task, had also become women’s responsibility. Marketing became much easier about 1995 when village production levels were sufficient to attract traders to the village. Yuying (HH#21) described the process:

We all prepare and package our fruit as the harvest market season approaches. Fruit shops in town track prices based on local markets. The traders or middlemen come to the villages to buy. Some planters sell the fruit themselves, but most of us find it too troublesome to cut out the middleman.

Women were soon recognized as better than men in bargaining with the traders. To prevent traders from bidding one household against another, women developed and set up their own process for establishing base selling prices and getting this information quickly to other households. Jin (HH#20) explained this system:
Most of the women do the selling, as we get better prices than the men do. Men give in too quickly. Women get together before the traders begin coming to the village and we discuss general prices we expect based on local information. The first one of us the trader approaches bargains really, really hard to get the very best price, and sets the price range. The initial bargaining negotiations take at least 15 minutes. Others then sell a little above or a little below this price range so we won’t be competing against each other and driving the price down. Final prices are set according to the type of apple, its size, color and quality, and are based on market demand.

A few women described their past efforts and endurance in getting their goods to market.

*At that time apples could make a very good price, and each time I carried about 120 jin [a jin is half a kilogram] on my bike, covering 20 to 30 li [a li is half a kilometer] to the bus station. I would go every three days. After arriving at the station, I would be so exhausted that I could hardly even see. It was so hard! By afternoon I would be on the bus to Xi’An City to sell my apples to apple shops and sellers. I’d be awake all night, and return home in the morning.* (Baodung, HH#8)

*Back several years ago in order to make money I would pick grapes from my courtyard garden and apples from my few trees. I would leave for Xi’An City on my bike at 2:00 or 3:00 a.m. I worked very hard! Forty days without stopping for three years until the traders started coming to the village.* (Yuying, HH#21)

Ling (HH#4) explained the women’s orchard tasks:

*In spring, we till soil around the trees, weed, stake and prune. Some start this in February with digging in organic material (like dried leaves and manure). In March we*
apply fertilizer to the soil. In April we prune, check and re-check the blossoms many times
to see if everything is ok, and the spacing between blossom clusters and buds within the
blossom. For pear trees, which are single sex, we attach bottles with sprays of flowers near
other sprays on the trees to cross-fertilize. Pears bloom earlier than the apples. March,
April and May are the busiest times of year. In summer (which starts in May) the trees
grow very fast, and there are many branches to prune. We may cut and peel off two cm of
bark about two cm deep around the tree to prevent too quick a growth. If the tree grows
too quickly, we'll get nothing in the next year. We cut the big branches back, rope and
stake branches to spread them out, make sure that the sun reaches all parts of the tree.
Check for insects and diseases to cure. In July to September the fruits grow bigger and
bigger. We support the branches, check for insects and disease, and don't water much (or
we won't get fruit the next year.) People are very busy. In October it's harvest so we pick
apples, prepare the equipment we need (baskets, large plastic bags, mesh wraps for the
fruit – make sure everything is very clean.) We carefully package the fruit to make sure it
doesn't bruise. We don't wash the fruit. We sell some and store some underground or in
the house. We don't store longer than eight months as the apples lose their freshness.
Apples that drop off the trees we collect and make paste, or powder, steam and mix them
with vegetables. Or we make vinegar, or we can sell them to a local factory that makes
not-very-good apple juice. In winter it's free time for us. We do as we like.

Women claimed marketing as 'women's work' and it brought them financial
power. Commenting on men's role in marketing, women participants said the
following.
Men don’t even do the marketing. Middle men come to the village to buy and women do the selling now. (Yuying, HH#21)

Traders buy apples from the women. Women are better negotiators than men. (Ling HH#3)

Mid-way through discussion with Mulan (HH#8), she described her role in marketing village apples, demonstrating her extraordinary power, confidence, and acceptance of risk. Her work as a trader was very much appreciated and respected in the village.

Two years ago, I became a trader myself. I saw an opportunity to increase incomes from apples for my family and for others in the village, and did some investigating. I decided to get the best village apples on consignment to sell in Heilongjiang for trade with Russians. Villagers didn’t like to sell the apples to me, saying that I had X-ray eyes that pick their best apples out of the barrel. I can see their inner quality. I organized a truck to pick up the apples and deliver them to the train station, and another in Heilongjiang to pick them up and deliver them to the dealer, I traveled by air, my first time on a plane. Because I had the best apples they were very easy to sell and I negotiated an excellent price. I brought the money back very quickly. Heilongjiang dealers ask me to come again this year, but I cannot as my mother-in-law is ill. But I was successful so want to go again sometime in future.

In response to my inquiry about risks and challenges she faced, Mulan continued:

I had never been outside the County before. When I first arrived in Harbin, I took a taxi. When I saw the meter was 100Y, I was so shocked! So much money! I insisted the driver let me out. I didn’t have that kind of money. The driver assured me he wasn’t cheating
me. He was amazed that I'd traveled so far with so little cash. I explained that I came from a village and had never been in a taxi before. He took me to the bus and told me which bus I should take and where I should get off. Later, when I had finished my selling and I'm on the train coming home, I'm carrying so much money, 66,000Y! I'm so nervous! People sitting near me ask why I was in Heilongjiang. I don't know them so I'm being careful, and I tell them I was visiting a relative. They ask who, and I have to fabricate a story about a sister who married a man from Harbin. Then I had to change trains. I didn't realize after waiting on the platform for a while that trains didn't run every half hour like buses, but had separate schedules. By the time I got back to the county, my husband had ridden his bike to the train station to pick me up and was waiting anxiously. Soon as he saw me he ran forward and called out, "Dear me! I've been so frightened for you! You've traveled so far and all alone, carrying so much money!"

Mulan proudly added "I figured out everything – and did it by myself!" Her old, deaf mother-in-law had joined us as Mulan talked. Her eyes twinkled lovingly as she looked at Mulan and said to me, "She has the courage to take a star from the sky," and the "courage to make a wooden pillar to support the sky! And despite her difficult early life." Encouraged, Mulan then described her very poor childhood, concluding by saying:

\begin{quote}
\textit{The apple orchard has changed our lives... I am able to do whatever I want to do now. Life is easier with the apples.} (Mulan HH#6)
\end{quote}

Her comment reflected the satisfaction of other participants with their role in the orchards that was less time consuming, physically easier, certainly more challenging
and profitable than grain production. Their lives had improved, and in slack seasons they had time to pursue their own interests and to socialize with others.

I have ability and we have a chance now.... and enough money to even visit Beijing!

(Xue, HH#4)

Work in the orchards is just less than one-third as hard as the work I used to do. But I still work hard. What else am I going to do? Sit around and stare at the walls? I'll keep going until I drop. (Baodung, HH#8.)

Women's position continues to improve, to get better and better. Women control much of the family income now. (Lixi, HH#12)

Village agricultural production had become feminized. In the absence of husbands, some wives found that they were now, more than before, making household and orchard decisions.

I look after all our money. My husband works in a cement factory outside the village and is only home a couple of days a week... I like the control I have over my life now. (Xiao, HH#13)

Compared to my life in my natal village, I much prefer life in Zhang Village. I have responsibility for the orchard and household, and things to do. I have control over my life now. (Xiao, HH#13)

I am in charge of household finances because my husband regards this as troublesome. We decide together how to spend the money, but when he is away, I decide and it makes no difference. He doesn’t complain. He never disagrees with me. (Mulan HH#6)

From a Women-in-Development policy perspective, feminization of agriculture presents challenges that may hinder the achievement of gender equality. Studies have
indicated that economic growth frequently leads to increasing women’s marginalization and workloads with no improvement in their position or status (Jahan, 1995; Kabeer, 1994; Macdonald, 1994; Sen & Grown, 1987). Women may remain tied to farms, and left out of the mainstream of the economy. Women’s livelihoods may be at risk from low production/low profits in precarious and unstable farm environments. They may lack the skills, knowledge and tools needed to increase farm productivity, and to decrease subsistence level farming. They may convert to cash cropping without diversifying their incomes, and become victims of fluctuating or declining markets. Feminization of agriculture may exploit women, and straddle them with excessive workloads that endanger their health and restrict their options and mobility. Family breakdown may occur when husbands migrate to cities and towns for work, and divorce rates increase.

In feminization of agriculture, Bradley (1989) notes, women’s work and skills may also be culturally devalued and invisible, while men’s work and skills in patrilocal societies may carry more prestige, status, and importance. Jacka (1997) indicates similar discrimination occurs in China where women’s work compared to men’s work has been traditionally under-valued and under-paid, despite pay equity laws.

In the research village, how did women participants themselves view their present roles? Were they feeling exploited and harboured resentment? Women’s work in the orchards had become more technical and profitable – but was certainly now gender stereotyped.

All women research participants indicated fruit production was less work and earned more income than any previous farm work. They now ‘had more freedom’ (Lixi, HH #12), ‘more leisure time’ (Xue, HH #4), plus sufficient income to hire help in busy
seasons from nearby poorer wheat growing villages. After the October harvest, they had little to do until spring (Fen, HH#2) and could pursue other interests, outside work, and socialize with friends and neighbours (Yuying, HH#21). As one participant described. ‘Life is much easier than ever before ’(Xue, HH#4).

For some participants, success in apple growing raised their confidence, skills, decision-making opportunities (Xiao, HH#13; Run, HH#1; Lixi, HH#12), their control and power (Yuying, HH#21; Fen, HH#2). As Xiao explained:

*I gain confidence looking after the orchard because apples help me improve my family’s living conditions. With the income from the apples, I can do anything I want to do. My husband works outside [the village], and so I manage our household finances – a job he finds troublesome.”*(Xiao, HH#13)

Several women participants had the energy, strength, and support to undertake additional work beyond orchard management. Run (HH#1) opened two kindergartens, Lixi (HH#12) was a model teacher in a primary school one li [half a kilometer] away, and Mulan (HH#6) successfully tried her hand as a trader, transporting apples all the way to Heilongjiang in North China. Yuying (#21) privately told me that “my power and control are worth the extra work.’ If the price of apples should fall, then she had back-up plans already underway for maintaining her high income. She had no intention of losing her position in the household, or on the village committee as assistant head. Their household had also contracted additional orchard land in her name, and she had already opened a business in the city without her husband’s knowledge. Her entrepreneurial mind was filled with many other options, only some of which she had had time to explore in depth.
Clearly, women participants viewed apple production as a great personal benefit to them by increasing their pride, confidence, skill, decision-making power in households, opportunities, income and status. They viewed their efforts and achievements as improving their lives, and those of their families. The field workloads of grain-planting days were gone, replaced by lighter workloads in the orchards. Increased incomes now enabled women to purchase labour-saving household appliances, prepared foods (e.g., noodles, dumplings and steam bread), and engage in home-based crafts (e.g., shoes, sweaters, quilts). Attitudes toward gender were adjusting with the times, discussions with villagers mentioned their acceptance of gender socialization of domestic chores. Some husbands, when home, were doing household tasks that previously were socially assigned to women.

Lin's research in China (1995) indicated that:

Women's contribution to household income is also changing men's attitudes toward their wives. It is reported that since both husband and wife work outside the home, men feel that they have to share the household chores and to manage household expenditures together with their wives. There are also reports of husbands, whose wives have become more successful than they, who work for and serve as assistants to their wives.

Not all husbands were full-time migrants, and in many households the husbands lived at home. With means of transportation, many commuted daily to work. Others in households visited had work in the village. With women's work in the orchards as a high priority, husbands' roles in most participant households also increased. Meal preparation, care of children and elderly were the most frequently mentioned tasks undertaken by men. Gender roles in households were also blurring, particularly in peak
orchard seasons, as men who had not migrated out of the village for work now helped with household tasks. Women participants were quick to recognize their husbands' contribution to domestic chores.

*My husband is very good and helps me. When I'm busy, he cooks and my son helps. Ours is a modern family. When I'm busy in the field, my son often cooks noodles for himself and for me.... We used to work harder before when we were growing wheat and corn. We have more leisure time now with apples and because much of the work is mechanized now.* (Ying, HH#16)

*Some of the men help families do housework.* (Fen, HH#2)

*My husband is the one who is the nurturer in our family! He spends more time than I do with the kids, and helps with their homework.* (Yuying, HH#21)

*My husband helps me a lot when he comes home [teacher in a neighbouring school]. He does everything. He helps me because I'm always so busy. He can make jiaozi [dumplings], wash, cook, help make steam bread. We've been married for twenty years and keep a very good relationship – try our best to work together.* (Xue, HH#4)

*My husband helps me in the field and does most of the household jobs like washing, cooking and looking after the kids. My husband works hard... he helps making steam bread... he can cook some simple dishes. He's busy but less busy than when we had crops.* (Zhixian, HH#9)

*Sometimes my husband helps to make meals to save time – it's quicker. My husband and mother-in-law always cook breakfast now.* (Zijian, HH#14)

*My husband helps me in the house. He can do everything but give birth to a baby!* (Qing, HH#17)
Mei (HH#18), whose husband is the village leader, complained that his working for the villagers left him little time to assist her and the family.

*I have to do almost all the work in the household and the orchard. The whole village depends on him. When I'm busy in the orchard, the housework just slides. The kids don't help. My first son is in the army and second son is still in school. I do everything myself. The worst job is fertilizing. Nobody likes it because it's hard and dirty work. I make my husband help with this – otherwise he keeps busy solving the problems in the village.*

I ask if she is proud of his good work.

*Just so-so. I try my best to support him, and I think that all the work usually done by men can be done by women. I try to do my best to keep the house and orchard in good condition. But I get angry sometimes! Other village women, outside and coming to the house, make demands on my husband's time and when I need his help he's too busy. I understand that his duty is for all the villagers. And I know that it wouldn't make much difference in our income if he helped me with the orchard. But if he worked outside as many other village husbands do my work might be greater but so would our income.*

(Mei, HH#18)

It is easy to tell that this is a familiar complaint in the home. Initially, the village leader has joined us, but leaves the house, head down and chuckling, as she continues. He is a busy man, and we meet on many instances on the street, or at Yuying’s house where villagers and I informally gather for a pot-luck lunch. He has a very good reputation with the villagers. Villagers’ rights to elect their village committees had been initiated in China only one or two years previous to my visit. On one occasion I ask him if his village has held an election. His response: “Not for this position. They can't get anyone
else to run! They’ll hold an election sometime when the villagers are angry at me, and want a replacement.” Would he be unhappy to lose this important role? His answer is succinct: “No. Not at all.”

The Meaning of Money

*The open policy is what set us free from poverty – we have a chance now, and ability!*

(Xue, HH#4)

Women-in-Development policy advocates the importance of increasing women’s access to, and control of, resources. Poverty-focused development projects consider income generation strategies for women of prime importance to target group abilities to improve family quality of life and to meet basic needs such as nutrition, health care, housing, clean water and fuel. Because women’s spending priorities, more so than men’s, address these basic needs (Moser, 1993; OECD, 1991; Sen & Grown, 1987), development projects frequently target women for income generation training.

This section addresses the meaning of money in Zhang Village, and describes changes that occurred as the village moved from poverty to prosperity and village agriculture became feminized. Research participants’ spending priorities are described with reference to recent trends in consumer spending in China. Improvements in the quality of family life, and women’s self-confidence and status, as described by research participants and some family members, are reviewed.

From Poverty to Prosperity

*After years of poverty, it was our first major crop of apples. My husband, son and I waited until the trader left our yard. We were in shock and stared at each other. I held 8,000 yuan in my hand! We had never seen so much money before in our lives. So proud and happy, I*
threw the money in the air, and hugging each other, we jumped up and down with joy. The money surpassed even our highest dreams! We were rich!” (Xue, HH#4)

When participants spoke of their earlier lives, with few exceptions they told stories of poverty, hard work, deprivation and, for some, abandonment. The women recalled years in which they lacked both food and water, cold winters with little or no fuel, living conditions so harsh that a common illness was for some life threatening. Many lived in crowded conditions. They described past histories with eloquence and emotion.

Soon after I was born, my mother sent me from Xi’an City where we lived to another village to be raised by a couple. My own family was broke, and mother had no milk. My step-mother had no children so fed me and treated me as her daughter. Later my step-mother gave birth to four sons, and I became not so much a daughter as a servant looking after the boys. She still looked after me and fed me, but the situation had changed. I had to drop out of school in grade five...and soon I was on my own. (Mulan, HH#6)

Bin’s story recounts living on the commune:

There’s a great difference between my life now and my mother’s. I have much more money, better clothes, better food. It was very poor in my village, and the only vehicles were two-wheeled carts you had to pull. Students had open examinations, so everyone could check answers with each other and from their books. It was the Cultural Revolution. No electricity, we just used a candle and burned some kind of oil. No means of transportation. People exchanged clothes when they went out to work in the crops, and made their shoes themselves. People sewed their own clothes, even made the cloth.

Women didn’t go to school. I’m the third of four kids. At that time, people worked as hard
as they could in the commune fields to get more marks [exchanged for food, etc.] Since women’s work on communes earned fewer points than men’s work, some women had to work longer hours in the fields, or did heavy work, to earn the points needed to adequately feed themselves and their families. No freedom of choice. My father had gone to school so worked in a danwei [government unit] later. He had to ride his bike a long way to work. At that time the danwei gave him his meals, but he tried his best not to get full and to keep some to bring home – mantou and other food. Now he has no need to worry about enough food because his standard of living is higher than he ever would have believed!

Zijian (HH#14) describes her earlier life:

Before 1983 when I moved out my parent’s home, I lived in a room where they fed the livestock. It was wattle and daub, so very cold. Ceiling dirt fell on everything and we had no way to prevent it. I slept ‘next door’ to the cow, and after the birth of my first son, neighbours laughed because my baby’s crying made the cow moo, and the noise mixed together in strange harmony. Ours was subsistence existence. We just ate the crops we grew, and seldom had meat or eggs, or even vegetables. We just tried to ‘fill bellies and keep warm in winter’. We understood about nutrition, but couldn’t afford it. We raised a few chickens for sale, and sometimes ate only the legs. Life started to improve after we planted fruit trees on some of our land.

Despite a law against the practice, the tradition of dowries and betrothal gifts survives, most strongly in China’s least developed rural areas. It is rooted in a tradition of virilocal marriage, to compensate the bride’s family for loss of their daughter when she is recruited into the groom’s family in another village (Croll, 1985). Educating a girl
is regarded as short-term investment. In poor households, the bride-price of the
daughter may be used as the bride-price for the son. In wealthier villages and
households, I have learned that the bride-price stays with the daughter marrying out, to
spend or save as she wishes. Baodung (HH#8) was from a poor household in a poor
village.

When I married at twenty years of age, we were too poor to even get enough food to eat
from the land so we borrowed food and the next year had to pay back with interest. My
father drove a horse and cart, and one day the horse was startled. There was an accident
and my father died. I was twelve at the time. My family had three sons and three
daughters so when my elder sister married first her bride-price was used by the family for
the eldest son. Without it, he would not have been able to marry at all. So when I became
engaged and got the money and gifts from my groom’s family, these were then used for
my younger brother’s marriage. I went into the marriage with just a few simple things.
We had only two changes of clothes each, two pairs of socks and two pairs of underwear.
It was so cold! We didn’t have warm clothes. We had almost nothing – and certainly no
money.

Although in Zhang Village bride-price is no longer allowed, the groom’s parents spend
as much as they can afford on expensive presents and the wedding. One participant
mentioned saving for her son’s bride-price, and two mentioned the high wedding costs
for parents of sons.

The cost of a wedding depends on family income – about 10,000 yuan to 20,000 yuan is
about an average for a groom’s family to pay for the celebration and some money to the
bride’s family to buy furniture, electric appliances, and so on. If the family is poor, they
still must pay some money and offer some dishes to the guests – the dishes could be less expensive. (Xue’s husband, HH#4)

In several of the households visited, the participants’ mothers-in-law, now old and bent, puttered about doing household tasks. Life was even more precarious for participants’ parents and grandparents, for some had lived through the close of Qing Dynasty, the wars, the revolution, the Great Leap famine, the time of the communes, and now under the household responsibility system. Another described the traumatic memories of her earlier life, hiding from roaming bandits who would beat or rape them and steal what little they had, crops burnt in wars she no longer understands, death of children, and years struggling for fragile survival, trying to keep warm in winter, ‘filling bellies’ with grass or whatever they could find. How do they compare these early years to their present lives? One old woman said that for her “I never would have believed that life would be so good! Just look at how we live now!” Another said, “I am old now and when I die, I will close my eyes in comfort that the world I leave is a better place than the world I entered” (Run HH#1). Baodung (HH#8) described her family’s poverty and her difficult life growing up, working full time at thirteen years of age, then continued:

My mother had a worse life. Her family was much poorer and she was sold at 14 years to a husband who was an idiot [brain damaged] much older than she was. He couldn’t otherwise get a wife unless his family bought him one. She gave birth to a child but it died. Then mother had me and a twin sister. Two girls in the family, so she gave me away to another family. Mother later divorced soon as the Marriage Law was past (1950). After my stepfather died, my stepmother brought me with her to another township and she married the village leader. Three years later after she gave birth to a son, he also died.
Still, she married again. She gave birth to three children, and looked after her third husband until he died. But I have never seen my birth parents or brothers and sisters.

This hard past life was a sharp contrast to participants’ present life styles. Xue (HH#4) reflected that her mother used to weave and pull a two-wheeled cart, and now she buys her clothes and has a car. Participants described life now as happier, freer, safer and more secure. Villagers get along well with each other now and help each other (Run HH#1). They have ‘control’ of their lives. They can buy whatever they need, have choices and options, and plan positively for their futures (Xiao, HH#13). The orchards, they said, and the increase in incomes made all the difference.

The housing boom: “Success will only come after one’s home is settled”

The change in the village was visually dramatic. Back on my first visit to the village in 1990, most homes were small, built of wattle and daub or mud and brick. Interiors were dark, with only a few small windows sometimes covered in plastic film as glass was costly. There were three or four rooms, each lit by night with a bare low-watt bulb hung by the cord from the ceilings in the centre of the rooms. The largest room accommodated the kang (sleeping platform heated underneath by a stovepipe from the small stove used for cooking), some old wooden chairs or stools, a table with a ghetto blaster, perhaps an armoire or open shelving for storing quilts and clothes. Walls were sometimes decorated with bright scenic posters or the old family photos common to rural China homes. The kitchen had a coal or wood burning stove in the corner, the

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6 This is an ancient Chinese saying quoted in Li, 1997.
window open to allow smoke to escape. Minimally equipped, kitchens contained a cupboard and some large baskets for storage, a table, dishpan and water containers. Some houses had a third small bedroom for in-laws, with a cupboard and general storage. Now these old homes are gone. Only a few were left in backyards, used for storage or kept because of nostalgia.

Building new homes started in 1994 (Fen HH#2 and Xiao HH#13) and soon became a village-wide priority, second only to providing for children’s education and investment in the orchards. On my research field visit in 1998, the village leaders indicated that 70% of the villagers now had new homes, and many more were building. They were affordable. The switch from wheat/corn crops to apples and pears required less than half the labour (Ling HH#3 and Baodung HH#8) but had resulted for most in at least a tenfold increase in household incomes (Mulan HH#6 and leaders). Their incomes and standard of living had “increased like a race train” (Yuying #21).

Our first priority for the money we made from the orchard was to build a house. We weren’t able to afford a house in the first year’s income, so we bought material and put it aside until the second year when we built. (Ling, HH#3)

Whatever people need now, they can buy. (Ying’s husband, HH#5)

Almost all the homes of research participants were new, built in a style which Judd (1994) described in her research in Shandong as a “glorious display of wealth”. The new homes were generally large, flat-roofed with exteriors decorated in white tile. Front entrances were wide enough to easily accommodate a car, and at least one family parked their car on the inlaid terrazzo flooring in the entrance hallway. New motorcycles decorated hallways in some other homes. New terrazzo floors glistened,
and most had a few delicate inlays about a meter in diameter designed in traditional patterns – lotus flowers, a baby with a fish, flowers.

Participants took such pride in showing off their new homes that it seemed these homes, and these rooms, were a display of their achievements and new status. Rooms were spacious, with high ceilings and decorative light fixtures, such as one might see in a decorator magazine. In one house, the main room had a large crystal chandelier about 1.5 meters in diameter – not over-sized for the large room and high-ceiling. New upholstered furniture remained encased in plastic. Most living rooms had an ‘entertainment centre’ that included a large screen color televisions, video and karoke equipment, disk players, and large collections of disks. A few had computers which they proudly displayed in the child’s room, used for “learning purposes.” Homes had refrigerators and laundry equipment, and some had freezers, and in some homes these were located in the spacious living rooms.

Yuying’s house is huge and was built in 1995. The date is inscribed in brass inside the front doorway on the stone aggregate floor. Ceilings are about four meters high, and the front entrance is a reception area not unlike a small hotel. The courtyard is swept leading out to their old red brick house. It is sparsely furnished, but everything is polished clean. The Chinese style kitchen is large and modern, with all the appliances. A large screen color TV with a remote, and other video equipment are in the living room. In the ‘den’ room where we first meet, there is a poster on the wall of a barely clad, glamorous, young Chinese woman sprawled on a very fancy motorcycle with an ocean scene in the background. A brand new motorcycle is parked in their dining room.
A few homes had additional areas providing relative privacy for the son and daughter-in-law. Some women planned to build another house if the son returns to the village. Despite Zhang Village’s shortage of farmland, this seemed an increasingly acceptable option for some youths as both urban unemployment and rural migrant labour numbers were on the rise (Zijian #14). The village has no more land to allocate, so an adult child’s return to the village involves dividing the family land, or fighting the village for a land re-allocation. Many participants, however, hoped that their children’s education would enable them to find secure employment in urban areas.

The few participants living in older, usually remodelled, homes always gave unsolicited explanations for not having built a new home. Reasons included saving money for a child’s post-secondary education, planning on buying a truck, having started later than others into apple production, or planning to open a business in the town or city.

The women I met gave various meanings to the new homes. In discussing spending priorities with a group of women one day, I asked why building was a top priority in the village. Answers varied among the group:

First speaker: *When my son gets married, he will be able to attract a better bride.*

Second speaker: *Everyone else is building houses, and they will think we are hoarding our money if we didn’t build too!*

Third speaker: *Yes, that’s right! Neighbours and friends would ask why we aren’t building a house?*

Forth speaker: *Since I have a good house, people know that I am doing good work, I’m successful, and making money in my orchard.*
Fifth speaker: *A house is a good investment. We cannot own the land because it belongs to government, but we can own a house. It's our home base and they won't take it away from us. Even if we moved out of the village, we could still keep the house and the land it's on for our retirement.*

Sixth speaker: *Our house is our home base. I'm tied to the land.*

On another occasion, Jin (HH#20) told me, the new house was not just to indicate status, but also to provide better storage facilities for apples. Almost everyone had special storage areas for their apples and pears, so could sell at a higher price later in the season or at Spring Festival. One participant had an underground storage area in her backyard, a tunnel, lighted and locked, about four meters long with layered shelving for the apples. Ying (HH#16) is married to Great Zhang, and in describing how he encouraged villagers into growing apples, commented:

*At first the villagers didn’t want to follow our lead...but when we build our new house, they were jealous and became motivated.*

The houses provided security; or ‘permanently fixed family roots’ for future generations; or were long-term investments that could not easily be taken away (i.e., by law agricultural land can be re-allocated, but by Zhang Village custom the land under the house cannot be re-allocated); or were an ostentatious but proud symbol of a wife’s economic achievements; or provided family members previously unimaginied comfort and style. Xiao (HH#13) reflected on the rapid housing development:

*Visitors from outside the village may build a house and think that they are displaying their wealth, or if they don’t build that people will think that they are poor. But villagers already know who is rich and who is not. Some have no*
urgent desire to build a new house, and are saving money until their children grow up. Some people guess peer pressure is involved in the house building going on in the village. Some have even built big houses, but there’s nobody to live in them because there are few in the family at home.

New homes were village show-pieces, and not just owners took pride in them. Building new homes, I was told, had become the new ‘village tradition’ (Xiao, HH #13). Dr. Judd (1994) also notes the importance of new house building among rural Shandong peasants. On becoming wealthy, she observed (p. 124) they “glorify their success, or even their hopes, with elegant flourishes on new homes built in a style formerly exclusive to the richest of peasants.” Li (1997) comments that, “If the first step is one’s own home, then the next step is a home like no other.” He writes about the rapidly increasing sophistication of the Chinese consumer, noting family and home are top investment priorities, and to afford these Chinese would go to “extreme lengths, including starving themselves, or risking malnutrition by eating only instant noodles” (p. 160). “From 1978 to 1994, 100 million of China’s 280 million rural families moved into new homes and by 1995, the average per capita living space of rural residents had reached 20 square meters” (p. 167). Zhang Village was following the fashion of the time. Among its nouveau riche, certainly ‘To be rich is glorious’ (quoting Deng Xiaoping famous words on his trip to South China in 1992).

Women’s Spending Priorities

*We bought a color TV, washing machine, built a house, dug a well, bought a tractor and two new bikes, plus a machine for fertilizing within five years.* (Ying, HH#5)
We have so many priorities for spending! Children's schooling, the house, taking care of old people in the family. (Qing, HH#17)

One day during lunch time with the village men, women and some children, a member of our group mentioned that for much of rural inland China the “Five Musts” of the 1980s were a bicycle, a sewing machine, a radio/ghetto blaster, a watch, and a TV. I asked the group to tell me their ideas for today’s new “Five Musts”. A large, new, well-decorated house was top priority for everyone, along with children’s education. Then discussion continued for some time through the lunch break about relative priority rankings of cars, the most prestigious brands of motorcycles (motorcycles were considered by some as more convenient and useful than cars), colour TV with at least a 27” screen complete with karoke and video/vcd equipment, fertilizer machines, cell phones, freezers, washers and dryers. There was no agreement on the remaining three “Musts.”

The group’s priorities reflected China’s rapidly growing market for household electrical appliances (Li, 1997; and China Daily, October 15, 1998). In urban areas, decisions to purchase appliances are initiated by women (Institute of Population Research, 1994). In Zhang Village, participants explained that household appliances not only reduced women’s workloads, leaving them more time for their profitable orchard work, but the women said they also made household tasks more acceptable to men. Motorcycles and cars provided ready access to markets, medical and other services available in the city. Village medical services closed down once villagers had the vehicles and funds to access better services and facilities available in the city. Vehicles were also necessary to support the increasing numbers of men commuting to nearby
cities for work. Fertilizer equipment freed men from the manually heavy task of fertilizing the orchards, and could be operated by women increasing their autonomy in their orchards.

Li’s analysis (1997) of consumer spending patterns in China describes how status is defined, and how spending patterns are unique to regions. In China, he claims, individuals measure themselves by others’ opinion of them, so spending choices follow the group. Those not following a dominant trend would probably be perceived as unsuccessful or incompetent, and he cites as example a Chinese businessman without a cell phone. This was somewhat reflected in the research village when the villagers I met talked about recent purchases, or when they were displaying these purchases to their neighbours. In Zhang Village, community consumer trends for quality, not just function, were evident as displayed in the houses, and top-brand vehicles and appliances. Fen (HH#2) commented:

People can buy mantou [steam bread] now, and noodle making machines. Some of the husbands make noodles since they have machines.

The possession of commodities can vary and depreciate in relevance over time. Individual discussions with women revealed thoughtful spending priorities. Children’s education and children’s skill training were a top priority. Participants worried about their children’s futures in China’s changing economy.

Education is very important. People without education will get laid off. Schooling is more important now than ever before. I’m strict with the children, and help them with their homework one hour a night. They finish the homework by themselves. I hope that they will go to college to university, get a bachelor’s degree after four years’ study. Children
have to compete now for the key school, especially at the senior high school level. (Xue's husband, HH#4)

Children need a good education to get a job nowadays. I'll encourage them to go to college if they are able. If they can't get a good job in the city, then we'll keep one child at home to help with the farm, and maybe take it over one day. (Chengong, HH#7)

When I think about the future, first importance is education for the kids. I hope that kids will have the ability to go far enough in school to get work outside [in urban areas].

Rather than plant apples, I prefer them to take higher education – but it is so competitive and difficult! They could pick up the technical skills to run the orchard, but if they are accepted for higher education then they have a chance to work outside. My second son is very smart! I try my very best to ensure the kids get a good education so they can get very good jobs. (Ying, HH#5)

The children's lives are much better than ours were. I want the kids to go outside and get a good education. If they get good grades, I'm planning for them to complete high school. I may live in the village for the rest of my life, but when the children grow up, I hope they live in the city. A big city preferably because that's a better life, and there's more opportunities, financial security, amenities, and you can meet more people there. (Qing, HH#17)

Her husband added:

If they succeed in school and have a career, they can live in big cities. I would rather live in a place where life is easier, and transportation more convenient.

His wife nodded agreement.
The families with school-aged children hoped their children would have the talent needed to get and keep a city job, as they viewed long-term farming futures as less secure. Those with school age children were pushing them to study hard, in hopes that they might qualify for post-secondary training. Two families had encouraged their sons, and another her daughter, to enlist in the army as a means of gaining skill training and experience, and on demobilization the promise of a job. Two participants planned for their children to run a family business in the county town or city, one participant noting that young people today would understand the market economy better than her generation.

Business reinvestment was another top priority. In the season preceding my visit, apple and pear prices had dropped for the first time in the villagers' experience. They were shocked, and worried that the drop was not just a reflection of a good season with high yields, but rather of a long-term over-supply in the market because too many farmers moved into growing cash-crop apples and pears.

Our standard of living was increasing like a race train until last year when the prices dropped because of the drought. The apples were fewer, and they were small. The price dropped more than one yuan a jin.... I'm very, very, very worried about the price for this year. Maybe there's getting to be too many trees now, and I'm thinking about other alternatives. (Yuying, HH#21)

Participants were preparing themselves for a permanent decline in prices in various ways. Investments in improved storage facilities by some enabled them to keep more of their crop to the winter and spring season when prices were higher. Others saw mechanization of the orchard as reducing their costs for day-labourers, and enabling
husbands to work off-farm to provide a second source of household income. Several
women were planning to switch to special strains of apples or pears fetching higher
prices, and moving out of the more common variety presently cultivated. One
participant was considering turning some of her orchard over to more exotic fruits, or
walnuts, with smaller markets but more profitable selling prices. Another top grower
planned on perfecting her crop, growing the largest and most perfect apples for which
there would always be a good market. Two women had already diversified into urban
businesses, each owning a small shop; one had kept her teaching position in a local
school; one ran a kindergarten; and another hoped to open a special school in the
village. A permanent price drop in apples was a serious concern, but seemed to have
heightened their interest in, and knowledge of, current markets as they planned for
their futures and those of their children.

Several research participants mentioned bank savings as a cushion for the future,
to finance children’s education and once married, possibly their city apartment or a
home or special room on the farm. One participant (Fen HH#2), a former bank
accountant, mentioned that it was usually the village women who took the money to
the bank – some not telling their husbands how much had been saved.

While homes, new furnishings and equipment were popular among the villagers,
the participants had serious, longer range spending priorities. There were limits to their
commodity spending. Debts, if incurred at all, were quickly repaid. One family sold
their car and bought a motorcycle, explaining, “It turned out we had little use for a car.
A motorcycle is more useful.”
Relationship of Women’s Increased Income to Status and Empowerment

Status, as I use the term here, refers to position and rank in comparison to others within a community, and as determined by the community. Status is socially constructed and an individual’s status will rise and fall with community acceptance. Empowerment is personally determined, and refers to self-perceived esteem, confidence, reliance and the internal strength of a woman to have control of her life and make choices. The relationship of women’s increased income is described below in relation, first, to status and then to empowerment.

Wealth and values as indicators of status

Research indicates that in a status hierarchy of household and farm tasks, men’s tasks, categorized and socially-labeled by men, become higher status activities. Women’s work, regardless of its complexity, is usually invisible or under-valued (Bradley, 1989; Croll, 1985). In Zhang Village, traditional task hierarchies and family relationships altered somewhat as “women’s work” in the orchard evolved first to include male tasks until these were mechanized, and eventually to give women control of orchard decision-making and management. Orchard work was labeled by villagers as ‘women’s work’, but in Zhang Village it resulted in higher incomes in most cases than the off-farm incomes earned by husbands. A woman’s wealth from the orchards was regarded by villagers as an indication of her competence, skills and hard work. Judd (1994, p. 124), in her studies in Shandong, notes that: “Wealth is a long-standing value in Chinese society, despite Confucian denials, and people are once again free to cultivate it.” Li (1997) described wealth as one of the three main attributes of status in
China. (The remaining two are power and knowledge.) Did wealth contribute to a woman’s status in Zhang Village?

In the eyes of the County Party Secretary and other county officials, and the head of the township, the role of Zhang Village’s women in improving village economy had raised women’s status. Several of the husbands interviewed indicated that a good income earns women status and respect (HH#21, HH#11, HH#16, and others). Women participants’ views on status differed, and reflected the strength of village values in determining status. Wealth was a symbol of a woman’s skills and competence in the orchard, and in that respect might contribute to the village’s respect for her abilities and hard work.

*I think it takes selflessness, hard work, politeness, education, being kind to others, taking good care of old people and kids, having good relationships between neighbours to earn status.* (Run HH#1)

*If a person makes a lot of money, but doesn’t look after elders, doesn’t respect others, or is impolite, no one will respect him/her. He/she must want to help others...contribute to the village, and win a lot of respect. Women win respect by hard work, helping others, inviting villagers to join in special occasions, and being skillful. Women lose respect if they are too proud, have bad relationships with others, are being lazy or stupid.*

(Chengong, HH#7)

*Women should be capable, modest, and people with good education must be very graceful and not braggarts.* (Yuying, HH #21).

*Education brings more status and respect, than being wealthy. Women also gain status by having good relationships in their family, raising children who become successful,*
looking after aging in-laws, having a higher income than most, being hard working and capable. (Mei, HH#18)

Working hard and helping each other...getting along with people brings status. (Xue, HH #4)

Status and respect doesn’t just depend on wealth. A person can have a lot of money but without virtue, it doesn’t bring status. Virtue involves justice, good family and neighbour relations, looking after the kids well – those sorts of traits. (Twenty-four year old County WF woman who runs programs in the villages)

Having a good job in the city brings women status. (Jia, HH#19)

Working and earning a high income brings status because it indicates you’re more capable, can teach others, can travel. (Unidentified village woman)

Most important to status and respect is to make money to improve living conditions of your family and enhance the family’s social position. (Husband of participant)

Although an indicator of women’s success and achievements in the orchard, wealth as a symbol of status was not the primary determinant of women’s status. The village had strong values that were espoused individually by all participants. They reflected State-promoted qualities for “5 Goods” competitions among families run periodically in rural villages. The web of village values served to restrict and restrain participants’ lives and opportunities. The women who were top producers accepted community responsibility for training others. They ran courses in orchard production to train the village’s new brides, being on call daily despite their already long days and sometimes hectic lives. Most participants spoke about the care and attention they gave their elderly parents, that in some cases required them to abandon careers and life styles
they preferred (Xue, HH#4; Mulan, HH#6; Xiao, HH#13; Fengxi, HH#15; Jia, HH#19).

On request of the village leader, Run (HH#1) opened two kindergartens to improve child care, to smooth children’s way into primary school, and to help mothers busy in their orchards. She said her husband did not agree with her decision because he did not think she would have enough energy or time, but she “wanted to contribute to the village, to realize something positive, and to help make dreams of others come true.”

Some participants regarded these values as more binding on women than men, limiting women’s agency and options. Men’s mobility was accepted, even encouraged. They could leave their families to work in the towns or cities, abandoned household and community responsibilities to their wives.

Two factors limited my ability to go outside [to urban areas] and very much prevented me from achieving my ambitions: my education level is too low and I have only five years of school, and I must take care of my mother-in-law who lives with us. She is very old and deaf now. [Mulan, HH#6]

Certainly this was evident in participant households, where care of the elderly and of the children usually was regarded as primarily women’s responsibilities.

There was no doubt that women’s position and status in the research village had strengthened. While income played a confirming role of women’s abilities, in discussion participants considered status and respect in the village as based on values which reflected ability to endure hard work, learn skills, improve quality of life of their families, and caring for and helping others.
Women's empowerment: “She has the courage to steal a star from the sky”

When participants described how increased incomes had personally affected their lives, several explained that their success in the orchards, the opportunity to learn a skill, demonstrate competence, and have abilities visibly recognized by others was the primary reason for their increased confidence and self-esteem. One explained that she gained more pride in being able to grow perfect and flawless apples, and to be praised for this skill, than she gained by increasing her income (Run HH#1). The advantages of their new wealth was described as providing participants with opportunity, with increased control and decision-making powers (as many were responsible not only for the orchards, but also had major roles in household income spending), with future planning for the family, with freedom to buy whatever they wanted, with financial independence, with ability to educate their children even as high as university level, with more free time and less farm and house work, and with voice in community affairs.

What were men's attitudes towards this change? Individual discussions with participant husbands revealed their pride in their wives' competence, and they readily accepted their wives' authority in orchard matters. Men appeared also to have labeled orchard work as "women's work." To give their wives more time in orchards, men (when home) helped wives with routine household and orchard tasks. Some shifts in gender roles had occurred. As the families' major income earners, women's voice in decision-making had been strengthened. Despite the constraints in conforming to village values which shaped some aspects of participants' lives, increased incomes had

7 Mulan's mother-in-law describing her daughter-in-law (HH#6).
clearly facilitated their empowerment as they became the agents in improving quality of family and village life.

The Influence of Women's Income Activities on Self-Confidence and Agency

In most of China, women's roles in production have been recognized for more than five decades. The efficiency approach and its focus on women's income generation is more easily accepted in China than it would be in developing countries that culturally limit women's roles to the home. Typically in rural development projects, training focuses on increasing household incomes by moving from traditional low-yield, subsistence crops to high-yield cash crops, improving livestock breeds and livestock raising, developing household microenterprises providing village services, or providing local cities with products requiring minimal cash flow but earning quick turn-around profits. Women trainees participating in income generation projects are often taught basic business skills in accounting and learning to read the market. Projects may either give income generation trainees some start-up funding, or are based on microcredit models that provide participants with small start-up loans. Rural microcredit projects usually target women for two reasons: (a) because their spending priorities address family basic needs, because their loan repayment rates have proven to be very high, and (b) because worldwide agriculture is becoming feminized as men migrate to cities and towns for work, leaving women to work the farm and to nurture and sustain the families. The Shaanxi project followed this familiar model, providing women with seeds and skills rather than microcredit.

In some societies where household patriarchs control spending of women's incomes, improving women's income generation skills results in increasing women's
exploitation and already heavy workloads. As Sen and Grown note (1987), income
generation development programs can negatively affect women and increase their
vulnerability. Research on women's status in China involving 3,537,284 rural couples,
however, found that increasing women's income is a key factor to increase their status,
respect, and self-confidence (Institute of Population Studies, 1994). Among rural wives
and husbands, 80.99% of those surveyed jointly managed income, with 10.21% of rural
men controlling incomes, and 6.94% of wives controlling incomes (ibid., p. 278).
Expenditures of rural women reduce domestic workloads and help make farm work
accessible to women. It is the rural women who initiate spending decisions on
household appliances and farm mechanization (Institution of Population Studies, 1994).

In Zhang Village, women said their increased income and potential financial
independence increased their options and opportunities. They realized their abilities
and developed their capacity to manage external resources. They were better able to
claim their rights to land, credit, and training in modern agricultural methods that
increase farm profits. They could compensate for the labour loss of migrating men by
farm mechanization and by hiring day labourers from neighbouring villages in peak
periods. They could reduce time spent on household tasks with labour-saving
household appliances, which encouraged husbands to take on domestic tasks. They
were also better able to pursue their interests and those of their families. Women
participants said their achievement and success in increasing household incomes gave
them pride and confidence – and the funds to support higher education for children
regardless of gender to better prepare them for the transitions of the future.
Reflecting on the project in Zhang Village, I had several concerns. Feminization of agriculture had been strengthened. In poor areas, this usually means accompanying feminization of poverty, not wealth as experienced in Zhang Village. Nonetheless, the village women were in danger of being trapped in a primary resource industry with fluctuating markets. A serious slide in apple prices could crush the confidence won through previous profits. A few of the women participants were already wise to market vulnerability, but most were not. This especially applies to the poorer villagers, with less confidence to accept the risk, and who moved into apple production several years later than others. They could be the first to lose in a decline in markets and prices. If they had taken mortgages to copy their successful neighbours' house building, they might lose their high labour investment in their orchards and possibly their homes. China's recent membership in the World Trade Organization would increase their vulnerability. Only a few women participants were handling diversification, outside work beyond orchard maintenance.

Women still shouldered most of the work in the households and orchards, even in households where husbands were living in village and not working off-farm. Women growers were not complaining since they claimed this amounted to less labour than when the household was wheat/corn cropping. Some gender socialization of household tasks had occurred, but it was mostly limited to those households where husbands did not have off-farm jobs or commuted daily or weekly. While men working off-farm were improving financial security for their households, they also had freedom of choice and options not open to the women. They were urbanizing as millions of farm workers must
in China as excess rural labour increases and production efficiency requires a shift to larger, more mechanized, farming.

Among Zhang villagers, the transformation from poverty to prosperity through orchard cultivation was a dramatic and tremendous accomplishment that opened more choices to them than they even dreamed possible. The Shaanxi Project had contributed to this transition under a WID efficiency approach yet “housewiferization,” as Mies (1986) had warned, had not occurred. Women’s situation was not worsened and women had control of incomes earned, contrary to Reddock’s experience (2000). Contrary to trends in China, farm incomes earned were significant and higher than urban incomes of the village’s off-farm workers (Li, 1997; Perkins & Yusuf, 1984). Bradley’s thesis (1989) on the course of development was relevant to Zhang Village, with the exception that women, not men, assumed management control over the profitable orchards. Once profitability was established, family patriarchs had not taken over management, as Jacka (1997) had observed elsewhere in China.

Women’s spending priority of the grand new houses brought pride to owners, but I had concerns about their future profitability as China inevitably moves to larger, mechanized farms that require fewer farmers. Their choice is understandable given China’s past decades of impermanence and insecurities attached to the concept of family home. Land reforms had passed from a landlord system, to redistribution, to collectivization and communes, and finally to the household responsibility system, all within their lives and the lives of their parents. Building new homes was viewed by participants as providing a ‘permanent family base’ (Chenggong, HH#1), and is a culturally bound common choice witnessed elsewhere in China by Judd (1994) and Li
(1997). It was certainly a safer investment than in China's stock market in the 1990s.

Other areas in which increased income had, or did not have, influence will be explored in the following chapter.
CHAPTER SIX: QUALITY OF LIFE IN ZHANG VILLAGE

Although the benefits of women's access to, and control of, income are important, they are not the only measures of well-being. Molyneux (1985), Moser (1993) and Kabeer (1994) discuss three categories to be considered in women's development planning: (a) "practical needs" refer to basic needs for subsistence, and involve the ability and the means to provide a family with adequate food, clean water, housing, fuel, access to basic health services, and basic education; (b) "strategic interests" refer to women's emancipation, gender equality, rights and freedoms; (c) "women's interests" are defined as their prioritized concerns. Poverty-focused income generation projects frequently target women as women place higher priority than men on improving their households' abilities to meet practical needs (Moser, 1993; OECD, 1991; Sen & Grown, 1987). While development planning focuses on practical needs and/or strategic interests, it must address these in accordance with women's interests and prioritized concerns to have relevance and achieve sustainability (Moser, 1993). Development in Zhang Village had clearly met women's practical needs and interests.

On my first day in Zhang Village, a comment was made by Run (HH#1) that "making money to improve living conditions increases social position, status and respect." What earns respect soon became an on-going theme discussed by villagers on the street, in Yuying's home lunching with the villagers, in households, and among my group of fellow travelers. By the end of my stay, they reached general agreement that money alone, without virtue, cannot earn respect. Traits contributing to virtue were debated among the women, and in their words the following were considered
important: (a) take good care of children by preparing them for the future; (b) be kind and take good care of elders in the household; (c) be a good neighbour by helping and respecting others; (d) work hard; (e) be skillful; (f) contribute to village development; (g) do not spread gossip and talk about other people's affairs. Personal traits mentioned included: not being a braggart, stupid or lazy, or doing anything bad. People should 'love themselves,' 'have confidence and be optimistic (or encouraging),' and 'look after others less fortunate.'

In this chapter, I explore the quality of life in Zhang Village and women's access to resources and services, some of which improved as income increased. In Zhang Village, several aspects of gender roles are examined: (a) gender socialization of children by parents, by schools, and by the community; (b) women's access to resources and services; (c) women's involvement in local politics; and (d) village values influencing women's agency, household decision-making, and priority responsibilities.

Gender Inequality in Access to Education and Gender Socialization of Children

The economics of education reveal that both private and social returns to women's education are greater than those for men at virtually every level. Also studies show that society suffers losses on account of unequal education for males and females because the value added to education goes up when women's participation is high. In systems where access to education is determined by factors other than ability, particularly the gender of the child, there is a 'misallocation' of resources. (Dr. Usha Nyar, 1989).

In China, sixty-five per cent of illiterates are women, most located in rural areas. Especially in poor and remote areas, the frequency of girls dropping out of school is several times that of boys, and this proportion increases according to grade level. Girls
comprise 86.4% of drop-outs between the ages of seven to eleven. Educating girls improves their life position and breaks the cycle of poverty in which a large number of women are trapped (Dezhi & Chunfeng, 1995).

In Zhang Village, most participants had two or more children, and efforts to ensure future security for their children were a prime concern for parents. Women participants averaged 2.3 children per household. Low income levels frequently inhibit poor families' support of daughters' education, and they are kept home to help with household tasks or to work in the field. When parents are struggling to pay school fees, educating the boy child has preference since he will be expected to maintain his parents in old age. Higher incomes achieved in Zhang Village, however, allowed participants to send both sons and daughters to the village school and on graduation to board at country schools for higher education. Several participants had sent (or aspired to send) their children to college or university. Zijian (HH#14) noted, "Schooling is more important for our children now than ever before". Providing children with good education was viewed as of paramount importance. Especially with restructuring of China's economy, good education was needed to provide children with opportunities and advancement.

Three of the four teachers interviewed (Run. HH #1; Lixi, HH #12 and Xue's husband, HH #4) indicated that more girls than boys were attending primary school, but could not explain the reason for this gender imbalance. Lixi, who had been teaching for twenty-two years, said that more than fifty per cent of the students in her school were girls, and suggested that there could have been an increase in female child birth rates in the county or province, puzzling since the birth rate of boys in China is higher
than that of girls. Run, a recently retired middle school teacher, also noted more girls in school than boys, and wondered if the boys were kept out of school to work on farms. Both indicated that this represented a change in recent years. I was informed that female drop-out rates beyond primary school are considerably higher than male drop-out rates, and male participation rates beyond primary school were higher than female participation rates. The village head had no statistics available. China’s statistics for rural areas have been somewhat unreliable, seemingly skewed to meet the nation-wide requirement for children’s compulsory education to grade nine. Nationally, the Women’s Federation runs a “Spring Bud Campaign” that raises funds to keep girls from poor families in school. In some areas, this has substantially increased girls’ attendance beyond that of boys, constituting a “reverse gender gap”.

Army training was an alternative choice of education among some families. With their parents’ strong support (or urging), several sons and one daughter from participant households had competed successfully for limited places, and subsequently enlisted. For villagers, having a child in the army was a source of pride and carried status in Zhang Village. One proud participant (Xue, HH#4) explained:

_The Government takes care of an army man’s family, so we can keep our son’s land while he is in the army. They will teach him a skill and will guarantee him a job on demobilization. Before Spring Festival, the Chinese Communist Party comes to our home to greet us and brings us gifts like that calendar on the wall [she points to it], flowers, cookies and things. They’ve been doing this in the country-side since 1950. In the city, the families get a plaque for their door saying “Glorious Army Man’s Family”._
Ling’s (HH #3) daughter had joined the army. She also was receiving job-skill training and had the same entitlements as Xue indicated above. I was told, however, that the army discriminates against women and few are accepted.

Our daughter is the eldest and her character is quite different from my son’s. She has great ambition, works harder, and does tasks automatically without being told. Even when she was in primary school, she would do many things for the household like cleaning her own clothes, and if sheets were hanging in the yard, she would automatically help by bringing them in, folding them neatly, and putting them away. Since she was small, she has washed her own hair. She likes to study and has strong self-esteem. After graduating from high school, she joined the army. The first woman soldier from the village! Great honour for her and for us! There are only twenty women soldiers, thirty at most, selected a year from Shaanxi Province. Army women usually become radio operators, nurses or doctors. My daughter is a radio operator in Xi’an City. She’s taking courses in the army and is eligible to write an exam after two years. After graduating from the Military College, the army gives her a job. In peace time, the army and administration work together….It’s a great pride to have a child in the army!

My son is very hard to raise because he is wild and has a strong character. He’s very talkative, and if he doesn’t like someone, says so and causes trouble. He is untidy and dirty. His mind is quicker though, and he likes to think and move around. He also wants to be an army man, and a good cook. Sometimes he cooks, wants to try everything! My husband, daughter and I are very mild in comparison so my son is quite different. He’s not afraid of anyone, and if anyone does anything wrong, he will directly speak out…. Nowadays children regard themselves as centre of the family and they are harder to
raise. It’s a social problem, not a family problem. My son is the King. Sometimes one family raises three children and each is very different from the other. First born: takes care of the mother, cleans, cooks, is responsible and tries to help. And the third born: can’t even be found! Running around getting into everything all day, needs others to take care of him, gets scolded by the parents, and sometimes receives a swat.

Participants described gender differences from birth (Run, HH#1; Fen, HH #2; Ling, HH#3; Baodung, HH#8; Lixi, HH#12; Zijian, HH#14). Boys were described as active, troublesome, sometimes disobedient and refusing to do assigned tasks. Girls were described as quiet helpful, loving, conscientious, and bright. Boys followed and learned from fathers, and girls watched and helped mothers.

Normally speaking, men work in the field and women in the house. Traditionally, men’s domain is ‘outside’ work, and women’s is ‘inside’ work. We help each other. Parents want their children to help, so girls often clean and sweep, and boys weed the yard. (Yun, HH#10)

I was told that boys were more difficult to raise than girls. Lixi (HH#12), a model teacher in a local school, described boys as ‘sometimes rough’ but she refused to ‘spoil them,’ as the ‘teacher must be obeyed.’ Lixi has three children, two girls and a boy.

It’s easier to have a girl than a boy….Daughters help more than the boys. My boy is strange, shy, and doesn’t like to do anything after school but sit in his room. My first daughter is sincere and very mild, and my second daughter is very wild but has strong character. She frightens easily – if she sees a worm, she will shrink away with a cry.

Among participants, there seemed to be little attempt to challenge or change traditional gender socialization of youth. Xue’s husband (HH#4), a middle school
teacher, reflected on gender differences in school attendance and children's learning abilities.

The Nation pays a lot of attention to education and policy for compulsory education to grade 9. Because Zhang Village people have money there's no problem in sending kids to school, and for poor families with single parents, the school can take care of them free-of-charge. More than 60% of the kids go on to high school. The difference now between gender participation in my school is that 50% are girls. It didn't used to be so and the policy seems to have increased equality. More girls. In primary school, girls study harder than boys, but when in junior high the boys do better. I think that's because girls often have good memory and work hard. Primary school needs that. Girls in junior high study harder than boys. Because of biological differences, girls may have more things to think about, so many separate thoughts among different things because they are growing up and reaching maturity – plus there are biological differences. Both genders have advantages and disadvantages. There are seven hundred children in my school, and the children come from five villages. Mine is a good school. In poorer areas they can't assure that teachers will be paid on time and a teacher may even have to work for months without pay.

Run (HH#l), a retired school teacher, noted that girls' grades decline in junior middle school and boys' grades "do better", especially in mathematics. She attributed this to a Chinese difference to boys' logical pattern of thinking and girls' intuitive pattern, and accordingly adjusted her teaching methods.

Traditionally, birth of a boy brings parents more status ('double happiness'). Male children carry on the father's name in Zhang Village (only two uxorilocal
marriages), and the son and his wife assume responsibility for care of his aging parents.

Zhang Village is a single-surname village. Daughters cannot marry someone with the same last name so marry out, leaving their natal village. Depending on distance, visits home may be infrequent. Despite these prevailing traditions, some participants clearly expressed a preference for their daughters. Their faces and manner softened when they described their pride in their daughters (Ling, HH#3; Lixi, HH #12).

Arranged marriages, common in the past, are disappearing in rural China. Parental approval is still important in adult children’s choice of spouse. Mulan’s younger daughter (HH#6) toured me through the second floor rooms providing living space for her brother and new bride. The rooms were newly furnished, and decorated with traditional wedding hangings and ornaments. Later, Mulan explained:

My son chose his own wife, and we didn’t interfere. They share the same interests, and that’s ok. My son paid little attention to her job or her appearance. I think the girl’s job is not very good – but my son doesn’t seem to mind.

Ying’s daughter and son are not yet married. Near the end of our conversation, her daughter and girlfriend join us. What do girls look for in a husband, I asked? They responded: “Ambitious!” and then giggling add: “Good looking too!” What do boys look for in girls?

The girl must be beautiful, and kind to her parents. He’ll check to make sure that she will be kind to his parents too.

The girls talked about their plans and ambitions for the future. The young friend spoke with confidence and enthusiasm.
I want to improve my understanding of automotive technology and run a factory some day. I've been interested in technology since I was a kid. I think I will become somebody in this field. I'm interested in machines. When I first saw an automobile, I wanted to look inside to see how it works. I drive a motorcycle, you know, and sometimes repair it by myself.

Ying’s daughter responds:

I want to learn knitting, but many factories producing knitted products are not so good now. If I can find a very good factory, I will go there. If not, I’ll try to be a leader after learning some technical skills.

On completing middle school, both girls’ choices for continuing higher level studies were limited to a coal school or a knitting school. Based on their grades, they were accepted by the knitting school. Competition for post-secondary training is so keen that career decisions can be thwarted by lack of access – and insufficiently high grades. In some areas streaming begins at the primary school level, and attending key (or top-rated) schools is highly competitive.

Do adult expectations of girl and boy child characteristics influence gender socialization and assumption of future roles? Certainly the image presented by some participants of girls as helpful, caring, working hard at school and at home, being obedient, polite and sociable seems closely to match self-descriptions and impressions of women research participant traits, indicating a generational continuity in images of womanhood.
Women’s and School-age Girls’ Access to Education

Women’s income earning potential, confidence, opportunity, and status is limited in most economies if their educational level is low. For this reason, WID projects usually focus on training and education in preparation for improving women’s incomes.

I believe that two factors are limiting me from going outside [working out of the village] and very much prevent me from achieving more success. The first is my low education level. I was taken out of school in the fifth year and sent to live with another family. The second is that I must look after my old mother-in-law who lives with us.

(Mulan, HH#6)

Those without schooling may develop skills and methods to compensate, as did clever and capable Fengxi (HH#15).

I had to look after my two younger brothers and two younger sisters most of the time, so I never got the chance to go to school. When I was young I wanted to attend like others and learn to read, but not now. It’s too late. I can’t catch up with people who are educated. I know numbers though, and nobody can cheat me! During my years in the commune, I worked especially hard in the fields to earn maximum marks. Then I would check my marks against others, and if mine were lower – I’d complain right away. I know how to add and subtract, and can sell apples in Xi’An. My memory is excellent.

In China women have less education than men, and less access to practical skills training. Surveys in China (Sha & Liu, 1995; Institute of Population Studies, 1994) indicate that in rural areas women’s years of education are significantly lower than those of men, with 27% of women illiterate compared to 9.7% of men (Sha & Liu, 1995).
Patrilocal marriage traditions in rural areas place a higher value on educating boys, who take over household land and long-term care for aging parents, over girls who marry out. The folk saying is: “Educating a girl is like watering another man’s garden.”

Gender equality in access to schooling is improving in China, but participation rates at middle and high school levels are higher for boys than for girls (Women’s Studies Institute, 1995).

With few exceptions all women research participants had less education than their husbands. Of the twenty-one women research participants, one was illiterate, thirteen had some primary school, and seven had some junior school or higher. Several in the latter category mentioned their strong efforts as adults to improve their education, through home study in the evenings and writing examinations.

**Skill Training and Diversification of Farm Income**

Except for Great Zhang’s training in orchards and CCWID Project training in courtyard cash-cropping, villagers had few or no skill training opportunities. In the beginning, Great Zhang said, his training in apple production targeted men because apple growing was considered men’s work in other villages, and would become the primary source of household income. He soon found, however, that most Zhang Village men were not interested in the training or in apple growing. He then extended his training to women, and soon found they were good, dedicated students. By 1998 at the time of my visit, training was usually given informally by women for other women.

Announcements would be made over the village loud speaker system to remind the women when to apply fertilizers or pesticides, and where to find the best price to purchase chemicals or other materials. Women in the village wanted training related to
securing and expanding orchard profits, and to diversifying their own incomes. Some were concerned about lower yields with the previous year’s drought, their households’ dependency on a single crop, and the need for income diversification. In households where the husbands were not working off-farm, women were concerned that the orchards were the sole source of income. Financial security was viewed as a potential problem.

_The price of apples dropped last year only because of the drought. The apples were small and many fell from the trees._ (Fen, HH#2)

_The cost of apples declined last year, and I’m worried about next year. Are there too many people producing apples now? We’ve no diversification. For most of us, our income depends solely on the apples._ (Yuying, HH#21)

The township had not yet developed successful, thriving enterprises to support local apple growers. The county seat enterprises only provided trading and packaging for local sale or export.

_We sold the small apples that dropped off the trees to one of the two township juice factories. These factories are old and not very efficient. We don’t get a very good price for the apples, but then they don’t make much from the juice either. Some people also make vinegar or paste with small apples that drop off. One shop makes shampoo._ (Ling, HH#3)

The women had many ideas for diversification, but recognized that some required training.
If the apple prices continue to fall, we’ll plant some crops to fill the quota [each township has an assigned quota to fill, and villagers can pay their taxes in grain] because we could be earning less from the fruit. (Qing, HH#17)

Most of the women I talked with had ideas for diversifying if apple prices remained low. Examples included production of other fruits like kiwis, walnuts, developing a village level apple processing business, or going back to growing grapes and vegetables in their courtyard gardens as they had done under the CCWID project.

Several were planning community businesses. One participant had already opened a business in the county seat and hired staff, without her husband’s knowledge since he did not share her attraction to city life and her wish for city retirement. In recent years, voluntary training courses in parenting and wellness had been offered in the village. Those few participants interested in training programs, however, preferred more relevant business or agricultural related training to increase or sustain profits and yields. Some participants had already increased apple production profits by building underground apple storage areas near their homes. This allowed them to sell the apples before Spring Festivals (in January or February) when market demand doubled profits.

Although some participants expressed an interest in skill training, they said that their needs could usually be met through their present organizational and financial resources. The drop in apple prices the preceding year had stimulated most participants to plan alternative ways to increase profits or to diversify, and think about their training needs. Women’s lack of access to training to upgrade their skills, to learn skills to improve their abilities to diversify, to develop feasible businesses and understanding the market system could prove serious to future income stability. Participants in the
village, however, believed that they had the ideas and resources to organize any training they might individually or collectively require.

Women's Access to Land

The State retains ownership of the land, but since the introduction of the 'responsibility system' in the late 1970s, rural household land allocations have been based on numbers of persons in the household with the local government responsible for periodic adjustments according to changes in family size (Judd, 1994). Farmers only have land rights for use in cultivation and certain other agricultural enterprises. Tenure is not guaranteed. Household land allocations are intended to be reviewed periodically, and reassigned according to changes in household membership. In Zhang Village, the average household size was 4.8 persons and average land holding was 7.0 mu. When arable land is scarce, re-allocation is a problem. Since farm production incomes depend on household access to arable land, it was difficult for village committees to take land parcels from households where a daughter has married out, and give these to households with recent births. This is especially so when the land has been invested in orchards with large initial investment by the households.

With the scarcity of arable land in the research village, land disputes between neighbours who are from more than one kinship sub-group are handled carefully by the '1-in-10 households system' and the village committee. Minor land re-allocations were made based on changes in family size, and those losing land were financially compensated for loss of revenue from trees on land transferred. Xue (HH#4) explained the system:

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8 One mu is equivalent to 0.067 hectare, so 7.0 mu is equal to 0.469 hectares.
They seldom re-allocate land now because villagers have planted apples [refers to heavy investment cost and several years of non-productivity until maturity]. The village committee discusses with the neighbours close by and everyone has to agree to move some parcel of land from a smaller family to a larger family. The committee evaluates the value of the trees and assesses the new owner an amount to pay the former owner.

In China, for a rental fee individual households can contract unallocated land from local governments. Shortage of arable land is a major problem for local governments. Over the years, land lease terms have lengthened in stages from initially several years to up to sixty years in some areas. By tradition the husband or eldest male signed the leases on behalf of their households, but by law, women and men have equal property rights. Claiming these rights can be problematic for rural women, especially with the tradition of patrilocal marriage (Jacka, 1997).

In Zhang Village, women participants expressed a prime interest in, and decision-making control of, the land. Because some husbands worked in urban jobs, several women participants represented their households in land allocation, and a few had contracted additional land. Women’s inheritance rights were also recognized in Zhang Village. These two factors (recognition of women’s control of land and inheritance rights) are regarded as a significant change in women’s access to land. As one participant noted:

Now women and men are equal: it doesn’t matter if a family has a son or daughter .... since the house, or land [lease] could pass to the daughter or son. (Zijian, HH#14)

Some parcels of land in Zhang Village had earlier been offered for contract, and had already been contracted to families who were the most able to afford the costs.
Contracts had been available to either women or men in households. With Zhang Village's inability to satisfy the inevitable land needs of increased population, land disputes could increase and threaten women's recently won status and position, and undermine their legal rights. Women participants' primary concern about access to, or control of, resources centred on the village's scarce land base. They noted that further divisions in the household land allocations would result in loss of orchards' profitability.

Anyway, most of the younger people want to move away to live in the city...There's no more land. Many newcomers now have no land because it has all been allocated or contracted. Some families have more than two children, and sons marry and their wives move to the village. Sons cannot marry a woman with the same last name, so marry out of the village. This takes some pressure off the land. (Ying, HH#5)

Some participants indicated that the threat of having to share their household land as village population increased was driving their efforts to educate their children to a level that would enable them to compete in China's changing economy, and to find stable urban jobs with good salaries. This, they reflected, would avoid their children having to face insecurity of farm futures based on scarcity of land and fluctuating markets for farm products.

Rozelle (1994) indicated that planting and land allocation decisions constitute a major source of power for village leaders, and in some areas village heads can push land contracts over to some households and away from others. They can also provide favorable prices and loans on fertilizer, pesticides, etc. to households classified as
demonstration households, which generally have the most experienced and able producers.

Administrative villages generally have quotas to meet for particular crops (e.g., wheat or cotton), and township and village administrations may encourage and support households to grow these crops by offering bank loans or, in designated poverty areas, by Poverty Reduction Board loans at interest rates as low as one or two per cent for the whole growing season. Sometimes the assistance comes in the form of seeds as further insurance that the farmer will grow the designated crop. This situation differs considerably across China, between leaders and over time, but is relevant to note since it means that households moving out of a crop with an area quota that is labour-intensive and low profit, may not be eligible for any government supports such as loans, seeds, fertilizer, etc. When farmers move away from the quota crops, they pay taxes in cash equivalent to the crop quota designated for their household land allocation.

Since China’s village elections system was introduced in the later 1990s, village committee members have more accountability to their communities. In 1998, Zhang Village had not yet held a village election, and the head and his assistants had held office for a decade or more. In response to my question about when they might plan to hold their first election, the village head answered: “When they let me leave the position.” In Zhang Village, as in some other communities, village committee members may have some political power, but depending on the area and the situation, there may be little or no competition for these positions because they are generally low-paid, very
time-consuming, and reduce time available for them to undertake other income generating activities.

Since Zhang Village is a single-surname village and women marry out, all inhabitants are kin bound by complex kinship relations. Mulan (HH#6) explained that various kinship sub-groups had developed within the village.

*There is quarreling in the village, but nobody brings these to court. My husband was a mediator for seven or eight years, but rarely was called on to mediate disputes. Kinship relations are complicated and considerable pressure can be exerted on an individual. There are groupings among kin based on history. When there are quarrels, they are settled within the group...usually at the next wedding or funeral or some other gathering.*

**Women’s Access to Services: Credit, Health Services, and Public Security**

Access to credit, particularly among poor families, is essential to support cash flow needs between harvests. In 1998, rural banks provided credit only to eligible farmers planting government designated crops such as cotton or grain. Credit was frequently given in the form of seed or chemicals. These crops were labour intensive and earned low profits, but poverty and the need for credit tied farmers to government preferred crops. Women research participants indicated that their incomes were such that they no longer had need for credit. When they were poor, credit was difficult to obtain unless given by friends or family. Poorer families in Zhang Village were assisted in costs associated with the switch from subsistence crops to orchards by neighbours and by revenues earned under the CCWID courtyard gardens project.
Accessible health services, money to pay for services, and availability of medicines needed, present major difficulties in China’s poor villages. Village level health services were provided by ‘barefoot doctors’ (i.e., women or men with a few months to one or two years of training) who are able and knowledgeable in basic health, simple injuries, mid-wifery, and symptoms of prevalent illnesses or health problems. A village doctor will usually work out of a room in her/his home, stocking a few common medicines on a shelf or small cabinet. These are sold to villagers for a few fen (pennies) over their purchase price. Services provided are usually at low cost, or free if subsidized by the village through, for example, an additional allocation in household arable land. Earnings are low, and not usually the motivator for undertaking the role as village doctor. Their contribution to the community is appreciated and recognized by the villagers who may occasionally bring small gifts of food. Village doctors have status and guanxi.

Village level health services are vulnerable in small poor villages, and services depend on the health and ongoing commitment of the doctor involved. When the health service closes down in a poor village, it is a serious problem. Villagers may not have the money to afford city level services, and they may not have the means of transportation to transport an ill person to the hospital or centre. In remote areas, transportation may be limited to the neighbour’s donkey and cart. The situation causes poor families to weigh treatment of a family member against the cost of providing city level services. In many rural poor families such a difficult decision would be made by the patriarch in the household, usually the eldest male. Women under such circumstances have less access than men to city level services. Maternal death rates of women and of babies (especially
girl babies) is higher in China’s rural poor areas than in urban areas though improving (United Nations Development Program, 1995).

Zhang Village’s health centre had closed down several years before my visit in 1998, but was not missed since villagers had their own means of transportation to the city and access to better services and facilities provided by township and county health centres and hospitals.

People are very healthy now. They go to the county hospital to give birth because the service is better. Women go a few weeks into pregnancy, and then later for check-ups. They go to the hospital just before birth to wait for delivery. There used to be a village service, but now it’s closed. We had two ‘doctors’ who had retired from Xi’An hospital. They didn’t have any land here, but opened a small clinic. The wife of one of the doctors hurt her legs so they moved back to Xi’An. The other doctor left one day. We’ve no use any more for a midwife as people use the county hospital. We can easily afford it now.

(Mulan, HH#6)

Hospitalization costs used to be prohibitive for Zhang Village’s poor families, and males then generally had better access to services than females. Higher incomes now meant villagers who needed hospitalization had the money to pay the costs. General health in the village had improved.

Health in the village is pretty good now. Few people get sick apart from the old people.

Villagers are taking their kids to the county or township centres at least once a year for check-ups and immunizations. Women of child birthing age get regular check-ups. (Yun, HH#10)
Provision of public security is important to village life. In the past, without adequate security, households faced great difficulties. When villagers described earlier times in Zhang Village, they mentioned their previous concerns about the frequency of thefts.

*Most villagers build storage cellars near the house. If it’s in the field, it has to be guarded.*

(Jin, HH#20)

*When we first planted apples, we kept watch dogs. People came from all over just to take a look, but nobody destroyed the field. We don’t have to guard the fields now.*

(Chengong, #HH7, one of the first families into apple planting)

*Back a decade ago my husband and I built a small separate shacks with old rough bricks at either end of our field. The field was quite far away, two li, from other people and houses. We slept there guarding our crops at night.*

(Baodung, HH#8)

Poverty increases the need for security, as a county official explained.

*Crime rates in the city and surrounding rural areas are rising these days. People who are laid off have neither jobs nor money. Thefts and burglaries are more common...If people don’t have enough money to eat, they’ll do something bad. They’re desperate and the outcome doesn’t matter. “Take my life, it’s worthless.” A lay-off can cause family violence and increase in divorce rates. There’re more women-headed single families now. The woman usually has the child and her ex-husband is supposed to pay child support. He may not have money. Men can take off and go anywhere.*

At lunch one day a villager joined us, and mentioned:

*Two li are one kilometer.*
When we were poor, there were frequent thefts. Sometimes the thief may have been a villager – but more often they were migrants or people from other villages. Now we have money and there’s no reason to steal.

Few families in this village get robbed now. (Xue, HH#4)

Public security was no longer an issue for Zhang villagers at the time of my visit in 1998.

There’s good leadership in the village now, and everything is in order. The economic situation is important and contributes to this. (Run, HH#1)

We re-oriented our fields when we switched into orchards, so that they all weren’t accessible from the main road. (Yuying, HH#21)

Security in the village is good now, because everyone knows each other. When we planted crops, we lived a poorer life. Security was not so good, and there were frequent robberies. But now the village has become rich so no one wants to cause problems. In the past, young people might cause trouble, or thieves come from outside the village. (Zijian, HH#14)

Some of the orchards I visited were divided into strip farms directly behind each household’s backyard, and only accessible by a village street rather than directly from the main road. With mechanization, this caused little or no difficulties in transporting fruits and provided increased protection from theft.

Village Women’s Interest and Involvement in Local Politics

Just as a mare can’t go into battle, a woman can’t go into politics.10

10 Old pre-revolutionary slogan quoted by Croll, 1985.
In 1998, Beijing media (*China Daily*, December 4, 1998, p. 4) promoted a recent revision of the law that would bring democracy to the village level by introducing election of village committee members. Village elections would “help create a new generation of farmers more politically active and willing to promote themselves, as well as reaffirm the role of direct election in China’s grassroots political life. Since the People’s Republic was founded in 1949, the village heads were assigned by higher authorities, and villagers merely and passively accepted what was given.” This article said that the intention was to “foster farmers’ self-confidence, their willingness to take responsibility for themselves and others, as well as their understanding about their own potential” and this would “prepare farmers for a world characterized by globalization and market economy”. This, it was touted, would bring a “new generation of farmers who will help prepare China to embrace bigger democracy measures”.

Zhang Village women had strengthened their decision-making roles in households, but I was interested to learn if they were ready to become involved in village politics and administrative decisions. Local politics remained primarily ‘men’s work.’ The traditional, socially assigned gender roles in village politics did not change with women’s increased incomes, confidence and power. In China, a village committee is responsible for village-level leadership, administration and security. Village committees are normally required to have one woman member who becomes the grassroots’ representative for the Women’s Federation, and seldom exceed this number. Several of the participants indicated that their extensive workloads did not allow them time to participate in meetings, and some admitted a lack of interest. Debrabandere and Desmet (1998), commenting on developing world societies made a similar observation,
noting that “women have no time to waste. If they do not see immediate relevance in a meeting or workshop, they will be inclined to lose attention, leave or stop attending.”

Women may not be abreast of issues, lack information, lack interest (or are assumed by others to lack interest), and are not expected to speak up at meetings (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, 1991).

Yuying (HH#21) had been on the village committee for seventeen years, and was the longest-sitting member of the committee and was serving as assistant head. She was a well-respected leader, gave her time freely to others while juggling a variety of roles as wife, mother, orchard arborist and trainer, and entrepreneur with a small shop in the local town. Before Yuying took office, Fen (HH#2), now retired, previously had sat on the committee for at least a decade. She explained her role:

I organized training in culture, policy, politics, family planning, and so on. Leaders would tell me what to do and if the women had questions, I would reflect these back to the leaders. I handled all the accounting and banking for the committee too.

I asked her about other women’s involvement or interest in village politics, and she replied:

The village was divided into six groups, and each group had a woman leader responsible for women’s affairs. They help collect taxes, and fees for contracted land. There’s no need for any more women leaders. The single woman representative we do elect [Yuying, HH#21] is excellent. Anyway, nobody wants a woman as leader. The men are rough...

and women don’t think they can control the men in the village, and that they are too busy for this work.

On a later visit, Bin (HH#11) commented:
I don’t know if there are any women on the village committee. I guess there might be one.

I would never consider becoming active in village affairs. Politics belong in the men’s domain. Men make better leaders than women, because men’s words have much more influence on the people.

Ling’s (HH#3) thoughts were similar:

Men can speak and best be heard by men....Men are best able to do a man’s role, and women best able to do a woman’s role. Both according to ability.

The village leader explained the lack of women in local politics:

Few women want to take these political roles, because it’s very hard to do a good job in the village – especially when the women have a heavy workload with housework and the orchards.

Women participants generally had little interest in local politics, most saying politics was ‘men’s work’, or that they were ‘too busy or ‘not interested.’ Lixi (HH#12), however, was elected by the Party as a county representative to the Party Congress, and explained that of the 200 county representatives, only 10% are female, considerably short of the ACWF goal of women in 25% of the positions. It is not just a question of women’s interest in politics, she thought, but also a question of women’s readiness and qualifications. She said that the Party elects the best qualified, and many women of her generation have less education than men. I asked her if it was hard to work alongside all the men, and she replied:

My job is to stand up for the women and the things I think are right. I find that some guys are rough, and some are not. I have observed over my years as a teacher that school boys have that same characteristic. I can handle it.
With few exceptions, Zhang Village women did not consider politics as a priority requiring their attention. They were content with the work of the few village women who were involved in politics, and limited their decision-making participation to the household level.

The Influence of Village Values

*People are friendly in the village – they try to help each other.* (Ling, HH#3)

Shared village values have considerable influence on how villagers were individually perceived, and the status and respect they earned from neighbours. The strength of Zhang Village’s patrilocal marriage tradition meant that villagers were kin, and everyone knew everyone else’s business. Few last-name exceptions had occurred on widow re-marriage, or with families who had had no sons bringing sons-in-law into the village to marry daughters who would one day inherit their home. This was important in securing the families’ household land allocations.

Some specific values are propagandized through a decades old State-wide campaign to honour ‘model families’ through public ceremony, and later by a plaque on their gate. The ranking of the criteria were locally determined. In Zhang Village the ranking for the ‘5 goods model families’ was: good production, good training and education, good care of children and elderly parents and in-laws, harmonious relationships in households and among neighbours, obeying laws and socialist ideals. Xue (HH#4) proudly explained that her family had been awarded his designation.

Village values were enforced by ‘one-in-ten households,’ groups organized by the village committee for planning purposes, or to resolve problems, or simply for communication purposes. Ten neighbouring households selected one representative as
their spokesperson. The village leader and his two assistant leaders (one of whom was female) met with groups of household representatives, the number attending based on those concerned with the topic to be discussed. These groups and the village committee were influential in setting village standards and expectations. I was told that disputes within family kinship groupings were usually resolved within the group, and ignored by neighbours unless serious. Family groups resolved persisting issues within the kinship group, or at the next family gathering such as a wedding or funeral (Mulan HH#6). Village level mediators are common across China. In Zhang Village, the mediator is selected for a seven or eight year term by the village committee, arbitrates or mediates first-stage land disputes, works to resolve intra- and sometimes inter-household disputes, and other problems. The mediator is seldom called upon, I was told.

We’ve been married twenty years and keep a very good relationship. We try best to work together. The fashion in the village is to be kind to each other, to old people and to children.

If there’s a quarrel, nobody cares if it’s a minor household matter. (Qing, HH#17)

There had been one divorce in the village, and Mulan (HH#6) explained:

Normally if there is only one child, the woman does not want to keep it because she may want to marry again. Only one divorce in the village, and the husband kept the child. It was a boy, but no difference if it was a girl. The son will live well because his grandmother is not very old, and will look after him. Normally a woman who is divorced will get a lower position, and the child a much lower position still, when the mother joins another family. No one knows where the woman went. She doesn’t keep in touch. They just didn’t get along. They had separate interests.
In meeting with Qing on a different occasion, she described this situation in a similar manner, concluding with:

*She left. We've no idea where she went or what she's doing. She's just not part of us or the village anymore.*

Work ethic was strong in the village. Young brides marrying into Zhang Village learn from other women' (particularly their mothers-in-law) and are expected to adapt and conform to the village's image of a model, hard working woman (Bin, HH #11). Once they marry in, they 'belong' to Zhang Village (Mulan, HH #6). One young participant (Xiao, HH# 13), who moved to Zhang Village on marriage four years before my research visit in 1998, described the village's system of orienting new brides. She was taught village values and customs by older women, and how to work in the orchard.

*I knew nothing about apple and pear growing until I came to this village. After graduation from junior high school, my father found me a job in the city and I worked there, living with my parents, until I married. Friends introduced me to the man who became my husband. At first I preferred life in the city, but now I prefer life in the village because it's my responsibility to plant the fields. It's not hard work, except in the heavy seasons. This is a much easier life than ever before. My mother-in-law and women neighbours taught me how to care for the orchard, and I can always call on them. I've gained confidence by looking after the field because my apples help me achieve better living conditions for my family.... I can do anything I want to do with the orchard, and control the income since my husband works outside the village.*
In my natal village women have very quiet lives. Families hire others to do the work in the field for them, and the women stay around the house when they grow rich. The women don’t lose status really, they just become ‘housewives’ deciding everything in the house because their focus is on house-bound activities – and because women are very careful. ... I prefer living in Zhang Village because I feel freer and have more control over my life. I’m young and learn from other older women. I didn’t know anything when I came here. I learned everything from them. If I have a problem, I know to ask for help and I will receive it.

Her life now had fewer restrictions. She liked to work in the orchard, and took pride in her accomplishments. When I asked her what gives women status in the village, she like many others replied being capable and hard working. Baodung (HH#8), almost a generation older than Xiao, reflected on her work in earlier years.

I’ve never minded hard work. Twelve years old and I was pulling a heavy two wheel cart in the village. Before I was twenty years old, I worked construction, pulling carts with building materials to build a bridge. My husband worked even harder because he was craftsman and village leader as well. I picked cotton while in labour, and gave birth to my son in the afternoon. I had the baby right after I reached the house. (Baodung, HH#8)

Helping and sharing among neighbours was expected. If Great Zhang had not shared his long and hard-earned skills in apple growing with others in the village, ‘he would be blamed by others’ (Fen, HH #2). He had made the most significant contribution to village welfare. With the support of his wife, he had worked diligently for more than a decade so that others could share in the benefits and profits of fruit growing. This couple continued to devote much of their time to training others in the
village and elsewhere in the Province. Villagers “expected” this of him (Fen, HH#2), and was his “duty”. In several households I visited, Great Zhang’s assistance and efforts which transformed village life were acknowledged in discussions. In conversation with Great Zhang’s wife she commented on the village’s lack of praise and public appreciation for his efforts, and said that the villagers “should be carrying him on their shoulders”. In the early years when they were poor, he had helped several households get started on fruit growing, providing them with some of his own saplings. They were now rich, but “most just took, and never paid back.” His generosity was simply expected.

Under Great Zhang, two participants studied and worked to become fruit growing technicians, and as expected complied to meet community needs by shifting their own workloads and schedules in order to teach others or to be on call for their problems. Great Zhang extended his training efforts to other counties, and to some other provinces. Chengong’s husband (HH#7) had become Great Zhang’s main understudy in training, and had also traveled widely in the Province. Chengong estimated that he had trained about 150,000 people. Assisting others is a strongly promoted value in rural China. Zhang villagers’ expectations of such significant contributions were high – but their appreciation and gratitude were low.

The expectation of villagers was that those on the village committee should make significant contributions of their time and resources. A committee member would not deserve respect unless s/he had substantial record of helping others. The village leader (HH#18) had served ten years on the village committee, and Yuying (HH#21), seventeen years, as his assistant. This work was time-consuming with small returns in
honoraria or power. The village leader's wife routinely nagged him to quit the job and spend more time helping her in the orchard, or finding a paying job in town. His work as village leader also consumed much of her time. Chengong (HH#7) helped and trained others with orchard tasks, on call daily for those who needed her assistance or advice. As her contribution to the village, Run (HH#1) was spending her retirement running the village's two kindergartens on a cost-recovery basis. She did this out of a desire to help mothers busy with their children, and to help children prepare for primary school. "Selflessness, hard work, kindness and care of old people and neighbours" were her primary values, and these were reflected elsewhere in the village.

It was also expected that richer households would voluntarily, without pressure, contribute generously to the village by paving a road or donating funds toward a building or well.

_There are peer pressures for the rich to share. If they don't do this naturally, they may be pressured by other villagers. Some of the rich people should complete a road. If there's a hole in the road, they should fill it._ (Zijian, HH#14)

There were other examples among villagers I met of their placing high importance on helping the less fortunate, or needed help. Some participants reflected on the help they had been given in the past when they were poor.

_We had nothing....People helped us by giving wood to build a house. Mr. L. gave us cement at that time, so we call him 'brother'. Since then he's made a fortune in building and now owns the fancy hotel and restaurant in town. We're old friends._ (Baodung, HH#8)
Several participants had mentioned that there was only one poor family in the village, a partially blind widow with two young children. The school waived fees, and the local government waived taxes. Other villagers helped her by providing food, money, and at Spring Festival gave her new sheets, delicious traditional dishes, and fruits. It was expected, and received with gratitude.

Adult children are required by law to take care of their parents or in-laws in their old age. Expectations of rural parents when they reach old age is that their children will provide financial support and daily life care (Institute of Population Studies, 1994). The responsibility for parents rests more on the grown male than on the female child. Daily care of elderly in-laws, however, becomes a primary responsibility of the daughter-in-law marrying into the family. In rural areas a young married couple often lives with his parents.

In Zhang Village, the role of elders was woven into family life. Filial piety is a primary virtue taught by Confucius, and by tradition families are tightly knit. For as long as they are able, elders in the family assist in the household and orchard, but I had no indications in any of the families that the elders held roles as patriarchs or matriarchs.

Old men try their best to look after the orchard. When they are too old, they just go to the field and look. Old women go to the orchard too sometimes, but mostly they help with the cooking, cleaning and looking after children. (Jia, HH#19)

Caring for less-able elderly parents was undertaken by adult children, with daily care borne mostly by daughters-in-law, but also by sons. This was a core village value for which great sacrifices were expected to be made. There were several examples of life
changes being made to fulfill these responsibilities. An accomplished carpenter gave up his profitable city business, ambitions, and work he loved to return home to look after his aging mother (Fengxi's husband, HH#15). Since his mother's religion required a special diet, Fengxi and her husband spent extra money and time preparing her meals. Even when they were poor, they would spend first to accommodate her special diet. Many women I spoke with talked about their responsibilities and caring relationships with their mothers-in-law, as this was very important to how others perceived them. Xue (HH#4) described the close relationship between her children and her mother-in-law. She said she gave her mother-in-law money every time she leaves the village, and claimed that their relationship is the model for the village. Mulan (HH#6), described by her mother-in-law as having the "courage to take a star from the sky," gave up a successful and adventurous career as a trader to stay home and care for her. Jia (HH#19) left her much loved teaching career to live in the village and care for her very ill mother-in-law. Lixi (HH#12), sometimes on only five or six hours sleep a night, had the strength and energy to juggle her multiple roles as model teacher, as elected county official, as fruit grower, as well as caregiver for children and in-laws. Before the orchards increased household incomes, the costs of caring for elderly parents was expensive and involved sacrifices by other family members. Even with their higher incomes, Jia (HH#19) and Yun (HH#10) noted the very high costs of funerals, in most cases more than 10,000 yuan including burial mound. Funeral receptions are well-attended community events and considered expensive (HH #19 & 10).

Village families placed great importance on caring for children and inasmuch as possible protecting their futures. Providing a good education for their children was
another core village value. Families who did not take good care of their children were criticized by others in the village (Yuying HH#21 and other villagers). Both parents shared in the care of their children, but mothers had the primary responsibility and spent more time than husbands in child-care related tasks. There were exceptions. In Yuying’s family a complete gender role reversal had occurred. Sitting with Yuying and her husband at lunch one day, her husband, a teacher, explained to me that he had accepted responsibility for child care and most household tasks. “He is the nurturing one in our family,” Yuying said, “I’m too busy making money”. Her husband admitted that care of the children, and her maintaining her income, were both top priorities for him. She made decisions related to the orchard, and many of the household’s decisions. Yuying was a strong, bright woman leader on the village committee who provided guidance and encouragement to other women in Zhang Village.

The strongest inhibitor to women’s mobility and career options was the influence of traditional village values. Women’s major responsibility for care of aging in-laws tied them to their households, and prohibited their mobility and ability to take advantage of off-farm opportunities. Village values did not accept participants’ hiring others as caregivers to elderly in-laws. Children had this ‘debt to repay to parents’ (Bin HH#11) which, in China, is enforced by law.

**Women’s Status in Zhang Village**

Prosperity in Zhang Village had resolved some of the difficulties women faced in gaining access to services and resources. They had the money to support their children’s schooling, and could afford costs of any training they themselves might need. They had access to and means of transportation to county and township level hospitals
and health services, and no longer wanted village level clinic services provided by a ‘barefoot doctor’ with minimal training. Women had some assets and could obtain bank loans in their own name – or they could borrow from neighbours. The village infrastructure was improving, and if fruit profits do not seriously decline, the community has the assets and means to undertake additional improvements. Girl-child access to schooling has greatly improved compared to their parents’ generation and compared to statistics in China. Providing gender equitable access to middle and senior schools appears to have been achieved in the village and in larger centres where middle and senior schools are located.

Gender socialization, however, persists in the schools and households. Traditional images of female nature hold sway. Women must look after their elders and put family first. Village women, with a few noteworthy exceptions in Yuying, Lixi and Fen, are not active participants in village politics, and some are not even observers. This is not uncommon in China villages or in communities worldwide, and was variously attributed in Zhang Village to women being ‘too busy,’ unavailable for meetings, not having the confidence or the knowledge and ability to present themselves convincingly before men. Although most of the women I spoke to expressed a lack of interest in involvement in politics, their active interest in village affairs would enhance their self-confidence and power, and give them voice in representing their own ideas, needs and interests. For example, Ying (HH#16) told me:

I think that the village should build a recreation centre, but nobody thinks of that.

Cooperation is needed to build that kind of facility. After she graduates, my daughter wants to start an old people’s home.
She had not shared her ideas with her husband or neighbours, as she believed that they would not be taken seriously. Women’s agency and power is thus far limited to their households and farms.

In the village, women and men have equal rights to household land allocations, rights to contract land, and rights to inherit land. These are rights not fully recognized in other villages in many parts of China. The scarcity of land is the major problem for the village. All arable land is either allocated to individual households, or on long-term lease to better-off villagers who were the first to afford the contract cost. As the farm economy grows, to remain profitable farms will have to increase in size and efficiency. This can only happen if some villagers surrender their land for re-allocation, or it is taken away. If they decide to move out of the village, only the wealthy farmers could afford purchasing the house. Selling houses at a reasonable price could become difficult. The parents’ encouraging their children to consider urban jobs is a reasonable strategy. Parents’ ability to support their children’s education provides a means for them to develop knowledge and skills required to compete in the emerging economy.

Values provide Zhang Village with strength, security, and assistance for the needy. They also restrict and limit women’s freedom of opportunity, as they have the traditional ‘double burden’ of orchard production as well as domestic tasks and care of children and elderly in-laws. Together these tie women to the farm, and govern a large part of their daily work. The cultural and gender socialization is strong and thriving in Zhang Village, supported by the women as well as the men.
CHAPTER SEVEN: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

I began this thesis by describing the decades of struggle involved in pushing donors and recipient governments to understand the importance of addressing women's needs in development programs. The struggle continues but, in the last decade, women's needs and interests have been increasingly included in development planning. Women's roles in development received considerable attention in the period surrounding 1995 and the UN's Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing. Before the Conference, women's development programming was a priority limited to a few bilateral agencies (Jahan, 1995), but in recent years a debate about strategies for development of women has replaced the previous silence. Large international donors, such as the World Bank, Asia Development Bank, and UNDP, have introduced or strengthened their attention to gender issues in development programming. The debate about women and development has continued, but has shifted to one about preferred approaches, largely centred on the WID efficiency approach and the GAD empowerment approach. Changing gender inequality and attitudes is not an easy problem with quick and final solutions. It touches many dimensions of beliefs, behaviours, and power.

In this final chapter, I re-visit program planning, discussing issues of power and partnership. Then I examine the effects of the WID efficiency approach in Zhang Village, reflecting on my findings, and conclude with some recommendations based on what I have learned during this research.
Long term changes in the status of women in China depend not just on particular programs and their effectiveness, but on major global economic issues and trends. In this context, I discuss the implications of gender socialization, feminizing agriculture, and the anticipated impacts on farmers of China's entry into the World Trade Organization in December 2001. I conclude with recommendations and suggestions for further investigation.

**Project Planning and Partnership under the CCWID Project**

Project planning, and the manner in which it is undertaken, is central to the success of a development project. Planning involves negotiation between donor agencies and recipient governments to reach agreement and mutual commitment. Kiggundu (1989) indicates that among developing countries, planning processes vary, but building institutional capacity in planning is necessary. In some cases, traditional top-down decision-making persists because the leaders involved are unaware of the benefits accrued from stakeholder involvement. Coaching in methods and skills is necessary. Donors control the planning process at the project design stage, and initial designs are drafted according to donor requirements and to reflect donor goals. Recipient country counterparts must learn the donor planning processes and be able to adapt these in accordance with their own institutional goals and reporting systems. This process is greatly simplified when the institutional goals of the donor and the recipient countries agree. Good planning requires recognition and acceptance of differences, and persistence in working to build a trustful partnership between the donor agency and the recipient country.
The donor agency may insist on participatory planning processes, as CIDA now does, and can expect to face challenges in winning acceptance and buy-in of this process from most recipient country counterparts unaccustomed to consultation with those outside their government. As the CCWID Project was “an island of innovation” within ACWF, the project implementation team was free to use participatory planning processes. CIDA encourages participatory processes such as focus groups, participatory workshops, baseline research and subsequent monitoring, community surveys, interviews with key stakeholders (including non-governmental as well as governmental stakeholders), and beneficiary target groups. By bringing forward the voices of stakeholders, participants and beneficiaries, the Canadian implementing agency tried to balance their Chinese partner agency’s top-down planning methods. Involving key stakeholders early in the planning stage leads to their support later during implementation. Participatory processes in planning, however, are initially difficult for recipient country counterparts unfamiliar with this approach and take time to accept. As Cervero and Wilson (1994) note, “recognizing people’s interests is a highly contingent process but one that is central to responsible planning” (p. 142).

In women’s development program planning, participatory research is important to keep the focus on women target groups, and to reflect their primary interests and needs. Including women from prospective target groups in planning contributes to their confidence, project ownership and commitment. In planning women’s programming, initial agreement between partners is required in selecting the WID or GAD approach that frames the objectives and activities of the project. The choice of approach is, of course, political, based on the intersection of the goals of the donor agency and the
goals of the recipient country, what each is willing to accept and implement, and influenced by the power of each. In the CCWID Project, WID was the dominant approach. Success of the chosen approach is dependent on a variety of factors such as partnership relations, mutual goals and commitment, activities chosen to reflect target group women’s primary needs and interests, and support of key stakeholders.

Building an Effective Partnership: CIDA and ACWF

Building an effective partnership between donor and recipient agencies was part of the objective of the CCWID Project. A number of factors are involved including: strong commitment to mutually shared goals; agreement on activities that are based on target group women’s primary interests and readiness; trust and the willingness to learn from each other and to adjust as needed to accommodate differences as they occur; and ability to bridge cross-cultural differences. Kealey (1990), studying cross-cultural effectiveness among Canadian project managers abroad, indicated that, “Interest in and interaction with one’s counterparts and their culture is a prerequisite to effective transfer of skills” (p. 7).

The CIDA and ACWF partnership was built upon mutually shared goals, and the power of partnership between the CIDA and ACWF resulted in the successes achieved by the CCWID Project. CIDA’s WID efficiency approach proved a good match to ACWF’s five year goal to improve incomes of poor rural women. CIDA agreed to build capacity within ACWF. Both had feminist goals. A focus on rural poverty suited the Chinese government at all levels because increasing rural poverty was becoming a threat to stability. The project became the keystone of CIDA’s China gender strategy from 1990 to 1995, and won ACWF the attention of international donors as a capable
partner in development. The project was innovative in introducing in China a revolving loan fund for poverty reduction which was not administered by a bank or State-owned enterprise; in partnering with ACWF as a mass organization (cum non-governmental organization) rather than a ministry of government; and in breadth as the project reach covered every province, region and autonomous municipality. It was ACWF's first experience in managing a large bilateral project, and broadened their mandate into economic development and revolving fund administration. Once implementation began, reform-minded leadership in ACWF spoke of the CCWID Project as their 'island of innovation' and gave Beijing project staff a relatively free reign in project management, but strict and routine reporting to their leaders.

With this freedom and during the first few months of implementation, CCWID project staff and Women's Federation stakeholders from across China established participatory processes for developing field projects. By the conclusion of the five-year implementation period hundreds of Women's Federation women and some men from across China were actively involved in decision-making and administration. Initially, our project office in Beijing decided to involve only staff at the project officer level from Women's Federations across China, thinking that this would prevent top-down decision-making. By the second year, however, the project officers were asking that their leaders be included in some activities 'to bring them on side.' We had neglected this key stakeholder, and then had to adapt our processes and activities to include this group, without decreasing the voice of the project officers who were organizing and managing the projects. Inclusion of their leaders improved local field project efficiency,
provided support for the project officers, and added visibility to the projects they managed.

Both CIDA and ACWF benefited from the CCWID Project. Money had long been a problem for ACWF and Women's Federations at all levels. Rosen (1993) echoed others when he described the Women's Federation as having "no money and no power" (p. 3). As an NGO the Federation's ability to influence government was limited. They receive about one-third of their funding from government, and do not enjoy the political and budgetary benefits of ministries. During the 1990s the National Government was engaged in serious cut-backs in budgets and staffing at all levels, as well as funding for organizations. Federation staff throughout China, especially in poverty areas, faced ongoing challenges and frustrations, and begged financial and in-kind contributions from their local government departments to run activities. When the CCWID Project began, Federation staff from across China were able to use the small amounts of money the project provided as leverage with their local government departments (e.g., husbandry, agriculture, water resources, to solicit funds and in-kind contributions (e.g., expert trainers, land, facilities, equipment). They were successful, and the result was a significant increase in projects and project beneficiaries. In many cases, the Federation increased the visibility of their skills in mobilizing grassroots women, and in organizing and sharing in delivery of training. They established fruitful, sustainable government linkages.

The project adapted to the emerging needs of their partner organization. In the early 1990s when the National Government began encouraging ministries and mass organizations such as ACWF to establish enterprises to off-set their operating costs,
project training programs branched into new directions to meet the needs of the Women's Federations. To assist in increasing their donations from the public, training involved fund raising and media usage. To support their efforts to increase operating revenues through business and enterprise development, training was offered in business management, banking and credit, development and operation of local markets, tourism and trading, and other topics related to China's transition to a market economy. Study tours to China's special economic zones were organized for women from poor and more remote areas who had never been outside their region, to give them the opportunity, as noted on return by one tour participant, 'to see what development looked like.' When Beijing was announced as the site of the UN's Fourth World Conference on Women, project training extended to include international women's issues. Asian study tours were organized to give Women's Federation leaders and their project officers the opportunity to broaden their experience, and to "open their eyes" to the benefits and pitfalls of modernization. These study tours facilitated their understanding of cultural and economic differences, and led to linkages with women's organizations in countries visited that proved valuable as the date of the Beijing Conference approached. Partnership strengthened as changes were made to accommodate the emerging training needs of the Women's Federation. Planning teams from both sides had adjusted to context and selected appropriate strategies for responding (Cervero & Wilson, 1994, pp. 118-119).

The partnership also proved beneficial to CIDA. ACWF's multi-layered organization was the only means through which CIDA programming could reach grassroots women in China. The ACWF had staff or volunteer representatives at every
level of government, including rural villages and urban neighbourhoods. No other ministry or organization, except the Party itself, offered this depth and reach. It also provided management support and networks for over one hundred Federation staff involved in managing field projects. The partnership also fulfilled CIDA’s goals. The Women’s Federation’s fund-raising and in-kind contributions enabled the project to implement twice as many projects as initially planned. The 70,000 women trained as trainers under the project trained 2.2 million women. The importance the Chinese traditionally place on education and training, and their strong work ethic, meant that women in target communities did their utmost to participate and learn. It was not uncommon for additional training participants to turn up at training sessions, prepared to learn even if they had to sit on the floor, or stand in the doorway. Local trainers would offer several training programs. In some training sites, sustainable model demonstration farms developed and became future training sites. ACWF’s Training of Trainers approach expanded the reach well beyond anticipated numbers, and provided CIDA with evidence of commitment and sustainability.

The Zhang Village project was one of the sixty-six field projects developed through the CCWID Project. Participants at the village level, and stakeholders from the village, township and country levels were involved with the Women’s Federation in development of the project. Women from fifteen villages volunteered to participate in the project training, and then worked with their village, county and provincial Women’s Federation offices on implementation details. In Zhang Village, the women volunteers wanted to increase incomes from courtyard cash crop vegetable cultivation
to support their households during the transition years. CIDA and the Ministry of Foreign Economics and Trade approved the project.

This strong CIDA/ACWF partnership made this broad project much simpler to implement and stronger in results than it would otherwise have been. The success of the project in the eyes of both CIDA and ACWF contributed to development of a second CIDA/ACWF five-year project in 1998, the Canada-China Women’s Law Project, again administered through the Association of Canadian Community Colleges.

**Shifts in Distribution of Power during Implementation**

Although more power rests with the donor during the development of policy, if project implementation proceeds successfully, the recipient government’s implementation agency gradually assumes more power and control delegated by the donor (Jahan, 1995). This redistribution of power depends on various factors such as establishment of trustful partner relations, successful skills transfer and institutional strengthening, and smooth implementation. It occurs as the recipient country’s field team takes ownership of, and responsibility for, the project. While donor and recipient agencies retain final authority, project planning during implementation becomes increasingly more field oriented and directed to serving field needs and interests. This process is essential for post-project sustainability of goals. In some cases, a recipient agency may accept a donor’s project design, but have little or no commitment to the project’s goals, or their funding and staffing obligations made during project planning. This was not the case for the CCWID Project.

From the beginning, ACWF was involved in development of the project. Once in the field, my co-manager and I sought advice and input from lower levels of the
Federation who would be implementing the project, and changes were made in objectives and process based on their input. Every activity, small project, and line budget involved had to be approved at quarterly Management Committee Meetings. Members attending included representatives of both governments, the implementing agencies (ACWF and the Association of Canadian Community Colleges), as well as my co-manager and me. Annual review and policy level decision-making involved CIDA Ottawa and China's ministry responsible for foreign funded projects. Activity approvals, management and policy decisions were made by these committees based on proposals and recommendations of the field staff in the Beijing Office. This format was required throughout the five years of implementation, but flexibility increased year by year.

As workloads increased Chinese staff in Beijing gradually grew comfortable with delegation. Project processes and management requirements prevented a top-down approach to planning and implementation, and ensured that the field projects would meet needs of target group participants. Each project was monitored quarterly and financial disbursements cleared. Annual workshops and informal site visits provided opportunity for local Federations to share experiences and challenges faced, and to seek advice or support from their new network.

Despite only one experience in managing a large development project, the Chinese staff were receptive to introduction of management systems involving staff terms of reference and annual evaluations, delegation, international accounting systems, gender analysis, results based reporting, monitoring and evaluation. Several years into the project, the Chinese staff was fully competent, and took leadership roles
at quarterly and annual meetings. They had assumed ownership of the project and its results. Staff were handling crises and challenges as they arose, and competently managing the project. International audits and project evaluations proved their skills and ownership. They had taken ownership, full responsibility and control of the project. In the last two years, none of the recommendations made by project staff to the management and policy committees were denied. Power and control of decision-making seemed to have tacitly shifted to the field. Institutional strengthening had been achieved.

Reflecting on teaching methods as an adult educator, I have found that participatory, learner-centred teaching is particularly useful for grassroots women. These methods focus on learner needs and interests, and ensure that the trainer is informed on indigenous knowledge. The traditional 'banking approach' creates a distance between the trainer and learners and does not allow as free an exchange of information, challenges, and related issues. An example of a related issue derives from the use of a competency-based curricula design. If the training is too directed on basic competencies, and ignores the broad context issues in which the competency is to be practiced, then expected results may not be achievable. In the research village, the project's "Courtyard Garden" training included cultivation of fruits and vegetables, as well as marketing. This soft introduction to the market economy later proved useful to the women in marketing their fruits. It also provided opportunity for future income diversification. At the time of my research, one participant, contemplating a drop in apple prices, was considering returning some of her land into vegetable and small fruit production.
The project could have been improved, however, with follow-up training given as a prelude to the transition to orchards. Further training in marketing might have enabled project participants to more deeply understand, and protect themselves against, the risks involved (e.g., discovering and tracking causes of price fluctuations, international trade barriers and benefits, alternative methods of income diversification, business investment, and support or development of down-stream production).

Planners from each side work within their multi-layered bureaucracies in what Cervero and Wilson (1994, p. 120) refer to as a “matrix of power relationships.” Donors hold the most power throughout the project design phase and implementation, as they always have the option to discontinue funding a project, but, as Cervero and Wilson note (1994), power is also reciprocal. At some point during successful implementation, and after the recipient agency has demonstrated knowledge, skill and ownership of a project, power moves from the donor to the recipient agency. The donor agency lessens their power and control, as it would not be politically feasible to cancel a project that had already proven successful. This redistribution of power is a key milestone for a project. It is evidence that skills have been transferred and the recipient agency’s capacity has been strengthened – significant goals for a donor agency.

**Effectiveness of the WID Efficiency Approach**

Feminist critics of the WID efficiency approach have argued that it exploits women to satisfy the production needs of a gender discriminatory economic system, drawing them into sex-role stereotyped jobs requiring low skills and little training, and earning them low pay. Systemic discrimination in households and communities may prevent women controlling the incomes they earn. The approach also assumes that a
women's day is elastic, and that they can handle the increased workloads. Women, Rowlands said, were being ‘instrumentalized’ and used as a “resource for meeting other development goals such as population control, sustainable development, and so on” (1997, p. 5).

The WID efficiency approach is based on the assumption that increasing women's economic strength is a means of empowering women themselves to claim gender equality. This approach is suited to poverty reduction, a major goal of recipient governments as well as many donors. As women's income increases, the quality of life in families improves, children's educational opportunities increase, and family nutrition and health improves. Okin (1989) and Black (1991) indicate that women are generally more inclined than men to order their priorities in accordance with the needs of their families. In some cases, however, the approach fails to increase women's income, or control of their income may be taken over by family patriarchs. Rather than financial empowerment, the result for women is exploitation and increased workloads. Also, there is no guarantee that women, once empowered, will claim gender equality for themselves. Women's empowerment without gender equality is restricted. Within this strategy, partners must select strategies to prevent failure and maximize opportunities for success.

The GAD empowerment approach faces an on-going challenge of gaining and retaining acceptance by recipient countries, and sometimes donors. Attempts to integrate women into projects on an equal basis with men have frequently resulted in token attempts by male dominated groups to include women in activities. Tackling systemic discrimination is long-term, and results are difficult to achieve and to measure.
Women without self-confidence and financial power are socially and economically vulnerable, and unable to claim the rights that they are given (Okin, 1989). Gender equality without the strength to claim rights is empty.

My research suggests that both WID efficiency and GAD approaches are needed and useful: each contributes to success of the other. Planners using the WID efficiency approach need to be sensitive to the criticisms and work to avoid situations that can potentially worsen women’s situation. Particularly in very poor areas, ensuring women’s financial security and their control of income are essential. Economic freedom is the first freedom (Sen, 1999, 8). Poverty restricts people’s access to basic needs such as housing, nutrition, clean water, health, education, security and safety, rights, credit, land, etc. Wealth is not a development goal in itself, but enables improvements in quality of life. Development planning must address women’s needs and priorities for quality of life improvements.

Exploring the WID Efficiency Approach in Zhang Village

I was an ‘outsider’ to Zhang Village, and not a China expert. Writing about Zhang Village, the themes are those that emerged in individual discussions with twenty-one women participants and eight of their husbands whose incomes increased as a result of the Courtyard Gardens project. Participants’ frankness and truth in discussions cannot be assumed, and quite possibly their narratives focused on the positive and avoided sensitive issues. I spent three to four hours with each woman and man participant. In three instances, the husband was present during all or part of his wife’s meeting with me – but in each case I was told by the wife that she wished him to be present. The husbands did not interrupt during my conversations with wives. The
characteristics of the participants, my background, the participants’ relationship to me, the development path in the field site, the timing of the research during opening of China’s economy, and the changes occurring since I undertook the field interviews are particular to this researcher and this village.

Zhang Village, however, had some similarities with other villages in the CCWID Project, and the findings have significance for understanding how the WID efficiency approach affects women in other sites. There is a dearth of field research in the WID efficiency approach. My research is useful in its potential contribution to WID theory, planning, and methodology that makes audible the voices of grassroots women as research participants.

Research participants told me that the project in Zhang Village was important in meeting their income needs. Women participants’ incomes increased with the “Courtyard Gardens” project, and enabled households to finance the transition to orchards and to move their households out of poverty. The women I talked to reported and demonstrated increases in self-confidence and agency, and attributed this to their achievements in their orchards and their financial independence. The transition from wheat/corn rotation cropping to orchards, they indicated, have decreased their workloads. Quality of life improvements mentioned included ability to finance children’s schooling, better family nutrition and health services, improved housing, and mobility with the purchase of motorcycles or cars. As the women pushed men out of the orchards, and assumed management and marketing control, most husbands sought and found off-farm jobs, diversifying household incomes. A few women participants were able to diversify their incomes through additional work. Several examples included
being a teacher in a county school, being an owner-manager of two village kindergartens, being a trader, and being an owner of a clothing fashions shop in the county seat.

From a WID efficiency perspective, challenges continued in several areas including feminization of agriculture, continuing socialization into gender roles, and women's lack of involvement in local politics. Long term results of this project, and others like it, depend on the long term trends in political and economic life in China. Rural poverty in China is increasing, and the gap continues to widen between urban and rural incomes. China's entry into the WTO may also disrupt rural income levels. From her research in rural China, Jacka (1997) noted: “It has been a common dream of the peasantry through the ages to get off the land” (p. 99). Urban unemployment rates have remained high in recent years, and opportunities for off-farm work are decreasing. These concerns are discussed in the following sections.

**Gender Socialization and Political Participation**

"Just as a mare cannot go into battle, a woman cannot go into politics" (Croll, 1985, p. 49 quoting a 1950s' slogan).

This old slogan has been quoted by Croll and others regarding barriers to Chinese women's political participation, and I was interested to learn its relevance, if any, to Zhang Village. Villages in China are generally patrilineal, and marriages patrilocal and exogamous (Jacka, 1997). Sons usually stay in the village through adulthood, but daughters marry out and their education is considered a poor investment for poor families. Parents who cannot afford to send both a daughter and a son to school give preference to educating sons. In China, school attendance is lower
among girls than boys, and girls discontinue their education earlier than do boys (Women's Studies Institute, 1995). Children's education is an important, and prime investment among Chinese able to afford the costs.

In Zhang Village the orchard incomes enabled parents to finance education of girls as well as boys. Participants expected educated daughters with good jobs, as well as sons, to contribute if necessary to the parents' future care. In this respect, participants interviewed indicated no gender discrimination. Children's education and job skill training was a high priority, and viewed as an investment in their children's future. Education was the key to youths finding high status urban jobs, improving their social status, and having life styles more secure and sophisticated than farm life. It was their ticket off the farm.

Gender socialization of children persisted in the schools children in the village attended. Textbooks in China reinforced gender stereotypes (China News Analysis, 1993), and according to the three teachers interviewed, gender role differentiation remained. The income generation project in Zhang Village seemed to have no effect on gendered images and expectations. Children's futures continued to be shaped by gender and politics.

Other gender stereotyping persisted in the village. At the time of my research in 1998, Zhang Village women, with few exceptions, reported little or no interest or involvement in local politics. They described politics and community decision-making as 'men's work'. Although women had taken control of village production and reported that their self-esteem and status in the family and in the community had risen, they missed opportunities to strengthen and to sustain their agency and influence in the
future development of their village. In December 1998 the *China Daily* (p. 3) described potential impacts of the newly revised law allowing village committee elections as:

...likely to help create a new generation of farmers more politically active and willing to promote themselves, as well as reaffirm the role of direct election in China's grassroots political life. For centuries, except at times of great social upheavals such as armed uprisings, Chinese farmers usually remained politically inert. For a long time after the People's Republic was founded in 1949, the village's heads were assigned by higher authorities. Villagers merely passively accepted what was given. However, with the newly revised committee law, villagers can now take into their own hands the running of village affairs....This process is of great significance in fostering farmers' self-confidence, their willingness to take responsibility for themselves and others as well as their understanding about their own potential.

Only three village women were (or had been) involved in politics, and each spoke of the challenges they faced. Each also spoke about the strategies developed to handle their roles without losing face, status or the respect of their male peers. Other women I spoke with had little interest in local politics or in running for office, as it was "men's work," and they were "too busy to attend to such matters." In 1998, family and farm were their priorities. It would be interesting to re-visit the village in five years to learn of any shifts occurring in women's needs and priorities. Studies in development (OECD, 1991) indicate a number of reasons for women's failure to participate in politics such as: unavailability due to extensive workloads, inhibitions about public speaking, believing they had little to contribute and would be ignored by men present, lack of education, uninformed on issues and unaware of their rights. Zhang Village women are
not alone in their lack of participation in politics. Under-representation of women in politics is a global challenge.

The CCWID Project in the village made no attempt to encourage or to facilitate village women’s political participation, although three of the twenty-one women interviewed were or had been in political positions. Increased participation may occur in future as the women themselves seek influence and control beyond their orchards and courtyards. Several women had expressed frustration that their ideas for village development were ignored (e.g., to develop an efficient irrigation system, to build a recreation centre, to build special housing for the elderly who needed care), but did not consider engagement in politics as their responsibility or role. Gender socialization was of interest to few women in Zhang Village, and of little concern to most. Content with their increased incomes, the women had not yet begun to consider their important roles as members of the community. Busy in their orchards, they were content with tasks they had claimed as gender-assigned to women.

**Increase in Women’s Self-Confidence and Agency**

Although Zhang Village women’s roles remained socialized by gender, and with few exceptions they distanced themselves from local politics, project participants believed that they had increased their level of confidence and skills as agents, an intended outcome of the WID efficiency approach. As village women’s roles in household decision-making increased, they were making some decisions without consulting their husbands, particularly in households where husbands worked off-farm and out of the village. Women had power to hire male farmers from neighbouring villages to help them in peak periods, and in several cases undertook activities against
the wishes of their husbands (e.g., Run opened the two kindergartens; Mulan marketed village apples in north China; and Yuying opened a small clothing store in the city). Women cooperated with each other in managing orchards, training in fruit growing, and marketing. Through such activities, they had developed their own support network in the village, strengthened women’s voice and visibility in the village, and had opportunities for collective empowerment. A strong work ethic among the women, and the high value the village placed on helping each other, contributed to successes in Zhang Village.

Most women interviewed described their increased confidence and self-reliance, and control of their futures. They believed that they were empowered. Among the group interviewed it appeared that wives and husbands were resolving gender-related issues and achieving a balance satisfactory to both. Some socialization of domestic chores occurred as husbands helped wives by undertaking some share of domestic chores (e.g., caring for the children, looking after elderly parents, cooking, shopping and cleaning), but household tasks remained the primary responsibility of women and were not equally shared. Women had reduced, but not eliminated, their ‘double burden’ of household and production work. One exception was Yuying’s husband, who had assumed primary responsibility for care of their children, helping with their homework, cleaning clothes for the family, and so on. Yuying was a strong woman, and in addition to her orchard work, she also had the time-consuming job as a long-standing member and assistant head of the village committee. In strengthening women’s self-confidence and agency, the Zhang Village project achieved success, but had little influence on gender task assignments in households.
Feminization of Agriculture

Rural women are China's main food producers in China (Dezhi & Chunfeng, 1995; Jacka, 1997; Judd, 1994; Villareal, 1995b). Feminization of agriculture increases as males in poor households migrate to towns and cities for work. Feminization of poverty results in situations where women are not trained in the necessary skills; or do not have health, strength or available time to undertake additional tasks; or have no access to credit or markets or arable land. In Zhang Village, women had the skills, time and resources to handle the increased involvement in agricultural work.

In the village, a reversal of the traditional gender division of labour occurred, but a gendered division of labour remained. Village women were tied to the land by their responsibility for care of children and elders, and financially by their role in orchard management. The women did not see this as exploitation, but as a preferred choice. Many of their husbands moved to paid jobs (e.g., taxi driver, labourers, trader, truck driver), most in nearby cities. The village leader estimated that at least half of the adult males were working off-farm. Their work in most cases did not bring them higher status as their urban incomes were lower than orchard incomes, and for many their work was physically hard. Women agreed with their husbands taking off-farm jobs since this diversified household incomes and improved financial security. Feminization of agriculture supported women's control of their orchard incomes. In instances where men stayed and helped women in the orchard, financial decision-making was mutually shared. Orchard tasks were socially stigmatized as inappropriate for men, but when women did them, they were not trivialized and considered of low status. Although
feminization of agriculture occurred in Zhang Village, its success brought pride and honour to the women involved.

The future security of their incomes, and of their pride, is a concern. China’s rural workers have less cash income than urban workers, and the gap continues to widen (Fewsmith, 2001; Gao & Chi, 1997). The downside is that women are left ‘back on the farm’ with primary resource incomes subject to market fluctuations that can push a family back into poverty within a few years. Women were enjoying their high incomes at the time of my visit, however, a drought the year before had reduced production, and market prices had dropped. Several women participants were seriously contemplating their options. Courtyard gardens had been replaced by the new, large homes but, as one participant mentioned, might be re-introduced on part of their land as a means to diversify incomes. There was less investment involved. Because of drought in 1997, apple quality and prices had declined, alerting them to the vulnerability of their incomes. An article in the *China Daily* (2002) identified Shaanxi Province as an “internationally recognized top-notch area for apple production” but in 2001 the Province had lost a European contract for 300 tons of “pink lady” apples. The Province was only able to produce 20 tons of qualified products after a province-wide search, because only one-third of Shaanxi apple growers had been trained. The rest were using traditional methods which resulted in inferior quality. The article indicates the vulnerability of primary producers. Zhang villagers, though well-trained and experienced in producing top quality apples, still lost out – they do not grow the popular “pink lady” apples needed in European markets.
China’s entry into the World Trade Organization presents another complication. It is expected that markets will broaden and increase, but only if production meets the strict technological standards imposed by trade partners, and is not excluded by barriers set by some developed countries through supports they provide to their own agriculture systems such as import quotas, domestic farm support programs, and rising tariffs (The Economist, 2002 June 15). Primary producers experience the price declines first, and reap the economic benefits last. Agricultural producers are the most affected when markets change.

Zhang villagers face a series of challenges, including increasing competition as local production expands. Plans to restructure China’s farming systems are underway (Gao & Chi, 1997; China Daily, 1998, October 5 & 2002, January 10). Farming experts are recommending a move from land-intensive crops (e.g., grains) to labour-intensive production (e.g., vegetables, fruit, husbandry and fish farming) (OECD, March 2002) in efforts to decrease the widening income gap between urban and rural workers. Almost three-quarters of China’s population are rural residents farming on seven per cent of the world’s arable land, to feed about twenty per cent of the world’s population. China’s arable land base is so limited that rural stability is threatened. Farmers’ options are few. They face increasing desertification, and periodic droughts, floods and insect infestations. Residential restrictions legally limit farmers’ mobility (the ‘hukou system’). Migrating to urban areas for work is becoming more difficult as urban unemployment rates rise (China Daily, 2002, January 10 & 2002, January 11, The Economist, 2002, January 19). In 1998, the China Daily quotes Jiang Zemin, General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, as saying that “sustaining stable
agricultural and rural economic development is the most difficult task to reach of the goals set by the 15th Party Congress.” Premier Zhu Ronji echoed this remark and is quoted as saying, “When you are talking about one single issue that causes me the worst headache, that topic is how to increase the income of Chinese farmers” (Financial Times, 2002, March).

Zhang villagers have few choices for increasing their future incomes. Examples include: introducing integrated farming techniques, diversifying income sources, exploring additional options for income diversification, finding niche markets or adjusting production to market demands, and developing local processing industries. China’s farmers are vulnerable, not only because of natural causes (such as droughts, floods, insects), and changing markets, but also because land is subject to re-allocation at any time. China’s 900 million farmers live in interesting times.

**Future Directions and Reflections on the WID Efficiency Approach**

Women’s development programming is an evolving and complex field, and research serves an important purpose of informing policy and practice. Despite the needs, there is a dearth of research available on WID and GAD projects, and their long-term results. Development projects are routinely tracked and monitored during implementation, and usually donors’ and implementing agencies’ interest in them ends once the projects are completed. From my review of the literature, it appears that the few studies and publications in English that do exist on WID or GAD projects and impacts have been undertaken by women previously involved in implementation. For the field development worker, these are useful references, and provide a means of learning from each other and strengthen our understanding and skills. My suggestions
for areas in which future research would be useful include: examination of the GAD project design, implementation, short- and long-term impacts and sustainability; further investigation into the WID efficiency approach as a means of reducing poverty and strengthening women's self-confidence and agency; and research into blended projects which have a dual WID/GAD approach.

The criticisms of the WID efficiency approach noted early in this chapter seemed to have little weight to the project in Zhang Village. Women described themselves as empowered, not exploited, by taking control of the orchards, by making the management decisions, and by controlling (or participating at least as equals) in household decision-making. It was the women themselves who pushed men out of the orchards. This gave the women control of the orchards, and gave the men freedom to migrate to urban areas for work. My investigation suggests that while feminization of agriculture occurred, feminization of wealth, not poverty, resulted. Because of the high incomes from Zhang Village orchards, women achieved greater financial empowerment than would have been possible if they had sought urban jobs. Quality of life in the village considerably improved, and new homes became a material symbol of wealth and women's achievements. Concerns that the WID approaches assume women have an elastic day were not evident as the orchards require considerably less work that the previous wheat/corn rotational cropping. My interest in Zhang Village continues, and I hope that in five years hence I may return to the village to observe its chosen development path.

The CCWID Project's women-specific focus proved advantageous in helping women in developing their own support networks, in facilitating their joint cooperation
in their production efforts, and in providing the opportunity for them to learn cash cropping and entrepreneurism in a market economy. Their courtyard gardens were useful in providing the funding required for a quicker transition to orchards. They also provided women with another method of diversifying household incomes if markets decline in apples and pears.

For Zhang Village, I have concluded that the WID efficiency approach was appropriate because it met the needs and interests of the target group, although it had some limitations. Distinctions between the various strategies and approaches in development programming for women blur, as they did in this CCWID Project. While some other CCWID projects had GAD elements (e.g., training in women’s rights and women’s issues; development of women’s banking systems and insurance), in retrospect it would have been useful to have integrated additional GAD elements into the project in Zhang Village. Some examples to consider include gender awareness of teachers in the local schools, encouraging women’s political participation to meet their long-term interests and elevate their decision-making roles to a higher level, gender socialization of domestic chores (holding the ‘model husband’ campaign), increasing gender awareness among men in the village, and higher level training for women and men in farm diversification skills (integrated with the orchards), product processing, village microenterprise, management and the market economy, and certainly preparation for the changes and challenges that lie ahead.

Further research in Zhang Village in a few years could reveal how women’s business has fared. As my thesis research focused only on those whose incomes increased, it would also be useful to carry out research on women in the “Courtyard
Gardens’ project whose incomes did not significantly increase. Learning the reasons for their lower success rate would provide field workers with suggestions for improving the training or addressing the context issues that resulted for some in lower returns for their efforts.

This thesis suggests several ways to improve results of programs using the WID efficiency approach:

(a) Using detailed field investigation and participatory methods, including community and stakeholder focus groups, individual household interviews, women only interviews and group discussions, and surveys, as this project did, will ensure that women’s needs are taken into account in development programming. Women’s involvement as agents or beneficiaries should be voluntary, not assigned by their leaders.

(b) It is helpful to investigate the income generation activities thoroughly, in order to avoid those that could result in decreasing women’s incomes. Great Zhang, master arborist and trainer, had undertaken this investigation, and with his wife had developed what became a successful farm for demonstration and training. He was able to provide the seedlings at no, or low, cost to the villagers. Participatory adult education is helpful in helping women trainees understand markets, business plan development, estimating profitability, small business accounting, cash flow and investment, options for value added and downstream or upstream profits.

(c) When learners are trained in skills which are new to them (as in Zhang Village when apple cultivation was first introduced by Great Zhang), it is helpful to
provide on-going advice and assistance throughout the growing season. The trainer, or extensionist, should take the initiative to follow-up with adult learners to help with problems they may encounter. As their skills improve through experience, the trainer or extensionist may be able to provide assistance in developing more advanced skills (e.g., processing products for higher profits).

(d) Consideration should be given to scheduling the training when the women learners have slack time available to participate. The trainer should advise them in advance of the time required to undertake both the training, and later, the cultivation. Women's day is not elastic, and some may not have the time to undertake training, or later to practice the skill. Gender analysis of the household’s workday would indicate if women would benefit from assistance in household tasks, and facilitate discussion and planning on how additional workload could be handled. Gender awareness training in the village would be helpful in broadening understanding of women’s roles, and in identifying differences between tasks that are culturally assigned and those determined by sex.

(e) Competency based skill training does not usually address context issues which may influence a learner’s success. In poor rural areas, these issues may involve training in literacy and/or numeracy skills, building self-confidence, public speaking and presentation, basic health care and nutrition, ensuring clean water and fuel, providing access to markets, obtaining cooperation from the community, and forming support groups and networks. The trainer should
explore with the target group any issues or barriers related to race, class, religion, etc., and work with them to identify strategies for handling these.

(f) It is helpful if the training is linked to a local women's governmental or non-governmental organization which may be able to sustain the training into the future. If appropriate staff from the women's organization are trained as trainers, the skill training may be extended to others. This would build capacity and increase visibility of the women's organization. Consideration could also be given to reporting successes achieved to the media.

The efficiency approach does not directly tackle systemic discrimination, but good planning can ensure that women participants become aware of their worth, informed and better able to address discrimination. Financial independence allows opportunities and options that can change the gendered division of labour, and of power.

The efficiency approach is aimed at development of poverty areas. Success depends on the context, the skills and knowledge of the women implementing agents, and the needs and abilities of women beneficiaries involved. Consideration must be given to a wide variety of integrated supports needed in some cases to improve (or adjust to) the context, and to enhance the skills of the beneficiary participants. A demonstration household may be needed to encourage other farmers to change traditional cropping systems, and on-going training in adapting production to meet market demands. Water shortages, frequency of climatic disasters, desertification, local customs, general health, accepted gender roles, availability of well-informed local experts, government and community support are only a few of the variables which can
influence a rural project. If these cannot be resolved, then income generating options will be limited and villagers' vulnerability to risk increased.

The success of a WID efficiency approach project depends on responsible planners accommodating contextual variables, and incorporating with women’s income skill training, other training elements that meet the related needs of the target group served and the community in which training is to occur. Further research is needed to take the WID efficiency approach to the next stage.
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